SPECIAL
PEPPER
AND SALT

SPIRITUAL PEPPER AND SALT.

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SPIRITUAL
PEPPER AND SALT

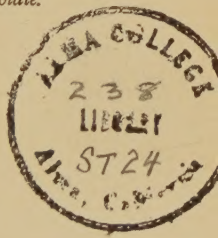
FOR

CATHOLICS AND NON-CATHOLICS.

BY

REV. WM. STANG, D.D.,

Superior of the Providence Apostolate.



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PREFACE.

Pepper and Salt are two indispensable articles on the dinner-table. From time immemorial they have been regarded as necessary condiments of food. Pepper has a hot, pungent, almost fiery taste. It stimulates and produces arterial action; it excites the languid stomach and corrects flatulence. Salt seasons food, acts as a tonic, and quickly passes into blood. A certain amount of it is necessary for health.

What the body receives in these condiments, I have attempted to offer to the soul of the dear reader in the following pages. With this little book I desire to put on your table spiritual pepper and salt,—truths that stimulate and preserve. Truth often tastes peppery and salty, but if properly taken, it cures the flatulent condition of mind and promotes a healthy activity of heart. Do not reject it on account of its pungent and bitter taste. Take it in small quantities, but take it regularly until it seasons your whole spiritual system and regulates your thoughts and affections. The Lord of life says: "Salt is good. . . Have salt in you,

and have peace among you" (St. Mark ix. 49).

It has been far from my mind to wound or hurt the feelings of our separated brethren. Nothing but the love of Christ and the ardent desire to serve the "other sheep" urge me to state the truth boldly and sincerely. The truth must be told, for the truth shall make us free. May the Spirit of Truth, who is also the Spirit of Charity, bring us all into the possession and enjoyment of perfect peace!

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SPIRITUAL PEPPER AND SALT

FOR

CATHOLICS AND NON-CATHOLICS.

I.

There is a God Above Us.

We know, with absolute certainty, that there is a personal God, a supreme Ruler of the universe, the First Cause, infinitely perfect in Himself. God has provided for all a safe means of knowing His existence. The laws of reason, the universal consent of mankind, the voice of conscience,—these are the great sources from which we draw the essential truth that there is a God above us.

Everywhere we see effects produced by causes, and causes producing effects. Everything is the effect of some cause, and this cause is the effect of some other cause until we come to the First Cause. Nothing exists in the effect which is not already contained in the cause. God, the First Cause, must contain all the perfections of all created things.

Nature proclaims the existence of God. The visible world exists through One who called it into existence. It has life and movement which proceed from Life. It has order from One who regulates it. It shows unmistakably the marks of design. There is nothing fortuitous in nature nothing flung into it at random. An intelligent being must have designed it. The laws that govern the world must have originated from intelligence. Apparent imperfections that meet the human eye prove the insufficiency of human knowledge.

All nations, at all times, have believed in a God above us. There never was a people, a savage tribe, that did not worship the Supreme Being.

The voice of conscience within every human breast makes us sure of God's existence. The voice of my conscience is His own voice, the voice of the Supreme Ruler who sanctions or condemns my every thought, word, and action. This voice speaks to me with authority, guiding, warning, reproving, and judging me. It often ignores my wishes and even opposes them. It tells me that I cannot sin with impunity, that if I do sin, I am offending some One to whom I owe reverence and obedience. It is external to me and convinces me of the presence of an external judge before whom I must appear.

Yes, there is a God above us and around us: "In Him we live and move and are"

(Acts xvii. 28). We absolutely depend on Him for every breath we draw and every movement we make. We therefore owe entire submission to His law. His will must be the rule of our life. Our chief duty on earth must be to praise and glorify God; our sole endeavor to become like unto Himself.

How is it that we meet occasionally people who find it difficult to believe in a God? The arguments in proof of His existence are strong and convincing to a sincere mind, but the depravity of the heart may reject the belief in God. "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God" (Ps. xiii. 1). The wish is father to the thought. The few that refuse or pretend to refuse to believe in God are a strange set who seem to shun the light of love and truth, preferring to grope in the darkness of sin. They dislike the idea of an overruling Providence, of an all-piercing Eye, watching them and searching their inmost hearts. The idea of God is very inconvenient to people who follow the bent of their evil inclinations and set at naught the commandments of the Creator. Live a pure and honest life, and your belief in God will never be shaken. Even the impious Rousseau admitted this practical truth when he wrote: "My son, so keep thy soul that thou mayest always desire there be a God, and thou wilt never doubt His existence."

II.

What is Religion?

THIS is the burning question of the day and of all times. Other questions may absorb the attention of the people, but only for a short time;—this all-important question will confront us wherever we turn. It is therefore of prime importance to have a correct idea of what religion is. Worcester calls it an acknowledgment of our obligation to God as our Creator, with a feeling of reverence and love, and a consequent duty or obedience to Him. Religion is a moral bond which unites us to God. If we regard it as a science, it teaches us what God is, what He has done for us; what we are, what life is, where it begins and ends, how it should be spent. The office of religion is to teach us the truths we must believe, the laws we must observe, and to furnish us with the means to keep the laws of God.

Religion contains the sum total of man's duties to God. It is a service, a state of submission, which Our Lord calls a yoke. It includes the essential idea of an obligation and of a responsibility to a superior; it binds the conscience and makes it accountable for its transgressions. Religion, as a virtue, shows itself

in religious acts: we adore God and thereby acknowledge Him as the Supreme Being to whom we owe allegiance; we thank Him for all His gifts to soul and body, for all we have and are: we beseech Him for His blessings and recognize Him as the Source of every good and profess our own nothingness. Religion must needs convict me of my sinfulness and inability to give full satisfaction. Confession and humiliation fill my soul in the sight of the All-Holy. An external manifestation of guilt and dependence by acts of sacrifice and expiation is the natural consequence.

Impress it firmly upon your mind that religion is a duty which you are bound to perform and which you cannot shirk without punishment. You are dependent on the Creator; you are subject to His will. He places restrictions upon your personal liberty. Religion, His law, must regulate your whole moral being. All your thoughts, words, and actions are under the control of religion. Yes, for your very thoughts you are responsible to the all-seeing God. Wherefore the blessed Saviour says that "whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (St. Matth. v. 28).

Religion assigns me my place in God's universe and gives the key to my life. Without religion, my life would be but one long winter of desolation, with no

star shining above me to cheer me on my journey, with no flower blooming on my path, with no ray of sunlight to dispel the chilling gloom from my sinking heart. Through religion, life receives a dignity, a value which surpasses the whole world. I stand between earth and heaven: I am a part of earth, my body the ignoble, perishable part; I am a part of heaven, my immortal spirit within me which no fetters can hinder from soaring upward to God, the Source of life and happiness. He has made me that I should be happy for time and eternity. The means to attain happiness is religion.

III.

What is not Religion.

We are living in an age in which a man has to keep his eyes open if he wishes to avoid being deceived, cheated, tricked, and waylaid. Counterfeits, adulterations, exaggerations—humbug everywhere—meet the unwary. Use the reason that God has given you, and look sharp at things before you admit or accept them. Get at the definition. To make the definition of religion clear, I will tell you what is not religion.

Religion is not a mere sentiment or sentimentality, prevalent among women and

children; it is not a passing emotion of the heart, nor a vague aspiration for things beyond the stars, nor a general dissatisfaction with existing conditions. Religion does not and cannot have its origin in sentiment, because sentiment works instinctively, even without reason, but religion is in the rational part of man, though it purifies and sanctifies the sentiment. This is the way religion takes a hold of man: the mind recognizes the existence of a God and Father in whose keeping we are; the will then submits to this authority, and is anxious to serve Him. Only man, having reason and free will, can possess religion, because religion must be an act of a rational nature and an act of a free will. But it is the most ennobling duty which man can render, by submitting mind and heart to His Creator. There is nothing sentimental in this; it is the problem of our existence: through religion we give to God what belongs to Him, what we owe Him.

Religion is more than good behavior. You may be considered a good man; you may be true and kind and generous; you may lead a peaceful, beautiful, and blameless life: all this is not religion. Your natural goodness will fade like the fragrance of a spring flower; it shall pass like the soothing tranquillity of a calm summer's night. Moreover, if you lead a "good" life; if you abstain from intoxicating drink on account of your social standing

or your saving habits; if you avoid other excesses for similar reasons, you do not thereby advance one step nearer your God; nay, if you do these things to be seen and praised, you are a hypocrite, and not a religious man. The question that religion puts to you is this: How do you stand before God? What is the state of your immortal soul? You may stand well before men; you may satisfy public opinion; you may be well-behaved, consistent, truthful, respectable, just in your dealings with your neighbor, kind and loyal to your friends, and generous to the poor. But is God satisfied with you? Remember that God searches the inmost recesses of the heart; He sees your intentions and weighs your motives; He judges evil thoughts and desires, sins of pride, envy, and ambition, sins which are hidden to the eye of man. You may be free from gross and hideous vices in the sight of man; but the decent and decorous sinner is further from God than the social outcast. If you are satisfied with yourself and thank God that you are not like the rest of sinful mankind, you are a sham, and religion is not found in you. No matter how good and holy a man may be thought to be, if he has religion, he will be thoroughly convinced that he is nothing but a poor, wretched sinner, an ignorant and wayward creature, that he must come to God for pardon of sin and for power to resist it. God does not need you; you need God.

Religion does not require of you that you spend your life in church in praying on your knees, that you look grave and severe, that you abstain from the pleasures and enjoyments of the world; but it requires a strict performance of your daily duties, not for the ultimate purpose of making money or pleasing those above you, but in doing all for the honor and glory of God. Wherever God has placed you, in whatever circumstances you find yourself, do your work cheerfully and in conformity with God's holy will. This is religion.

IV.

Without Religious Belief no Man can go to Heaven.

RELIGION is the supreme law which all are bound to obey in thought, word, and deed. It comes from the Supreme Lawgiver, God, who has a right to legislate for the mind and conscience of man. He who refuses to submit his reason and will to the law of God, rebels against the divine authority and signs his death warrant; he creates his own hell.

Why should an irreligious man, who is a good man, be eternally lost? An irreligious man cannot be a good man: he is wicked. He who refuses to believe, vio-

lates the law of God just the same as he who steals, gets drunk, blasphemes, commits adultery, etc., and "such shall not possess the kingdom of God." The irreligious cannot blame God; He does not damn them; they damn themselves.

Even in pagan times, irreligion and atheism were considered as dreadful crimes against the divinity; those guilty of them were punished with death.

Denial or refusal of religion is the most detestable crime that man can commit. It is a sin which is not committed through ignorance or mere human weakness, but it directly attacks the authority of God, whom it seeks to put out of existence and to destroy.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). We cannot be the friends of God unless we have divine faith, that is, unless we believe firmly in all that God has taught. Our blessed Saviour makes it the absolute condition of salvation: "He that believeth not shall be condemned" (St. Mark xvi. 16).

But what about those who doubt if there be a God or who cannot believe in His existence? St. Paul tells us that to doubt God's existence or to refuse to believe in it, is an inexcusable sin; it is the denial of a self-evident truth: "Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly

seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity: so that they are inexcusable" (Rom. i. 19, 20).

Should there be, however, such infidels as are not to be blamed for their infidelity and who are living up to the dictates of their conscience, they will finally come within the reach of religious belief. St. Thomas Aquinas explains it thus: "If any one was brought up in the wilderness or among brute beasts, and yet followed the law of nature to desire what is good and to avoid what is wicked, we should certainly believe that God either by an inward inspiration would reveal to him what he should believe, or would send some one to preach the faith to him, as He sent Peter to Cornelius."

"He that believeth not shall be condemned."

We are created for heaven. Eternal happiness is awaiting us. The condition to obtain it is the religion of Jesus Christ. Without religion no man will be saved.

V.

The Catholic Church the Work of God; all other "Churches" the Work of Men.

CHRIST founded and instituted a Church. This is a historical fact admitted by all, Catholics and non-Catholics.

All likewise admit that Christ established but one Church; for whenever He speaks of His Church, He uses the singular number. He says: "Hear the Church," not, the churches; "upon this rock I will build My Church," not, My churches. He compares His Church to a sheepfold, with one shepherd; to a kingdom, with one ruler, one form of government, one code of laws. This Church of Christ is the congregation of all the faithful who, being baptized, profess the same faith, partake of the same sacraments, worship God with the same sacrifice, and are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible head.

Now there are many different denominations on earth all claiming to be the true Church of Jesus Christ. It is true that one only can be the Church of Christ, the one He established Himself in the year 33. Any Church which has not been in existence for 1868 years is not the Church which Christ, the Son of God, established before He left the world to go to the Father.

There is one Church, as history proves, which has existed that length of time. The Catholic Church alone has existed for 1868 years. She alone is the work of God; all other churches are of recent date, and are merely human inventions. There never was a Protestant or Lutheran Church before Martin Luther, in the sixteenth century; there never was an Epis-

copalian or Anglican Church before Henry VIII.; there never was a Presbyterian Church before John Knox; there never was a Methodist Church before John Wesley; there never were Quakers before George Fox; there never was an Anabaptist or Baptist Church before Nicolas Stork; there never was a "Christian" Church before Alexander Campbell.

These men had no more right to found a Church than you or I have. Religion must come from God. The Catholic Church alone has a divine Founder. Christ gave His solemn oath that His Church would stand until the end of time. And the Church has stood every conceivable persecution and opposition. The false prophets, with their churches, came and disappeared; because everything human is doomed to die. The Catholic Church is not human; she is divine. Do not pin your faith on the opinion of man. See that you stand on solid ground. Seek the Church which alone can save you.

VI.

Out of the Catholic Church there is no Salvation.

It is an act of the greatest charity to proclaim this stern doctrine of Jesus Christ and His blessed Apostles. Those who sincerely seek the truth will receive it with grateful joy: they will cease bat-

tling with the dangerous waves of doubt and unbelief, and willingly enter the secure ship of the Church that will land them safely on the shores of eternity.

Christ has founded His Church for all men; it is His expressed will that all should belong to it in order to be saved. For this purpose, the Church has received from Christ His own doctrine, His means of grace, His authority, and the assistance of the Holy Ghost to keep her infallible and uncorrupted in her teachings. Every one is obliged to become a member of the Catholic Church, at the risk of eternal salvation. To despise the Church is to despise Christ; to separate from the Church is to separate from Christ. And we know that without Christ no man can be saved. "No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (St. John xiv. 6). "For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). And Christ says: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican" (St. Matth. xviii. 17). The Catholic Church is the only saving Church. "Whosoever is separated from the Catholic Church, however commendable in his own opinion his life may be, he shall for this very reason, that he is at the same time separated from the unity of Christ, not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (St. Augustine).

Now, all those are members of the Cath-

olic Church, who are baptized and who have neither voluntarily separated themselves nor been excluded from her. Those who without their own fault are heretics, that is, who profess a doctrine condemned by the Church, but who seek the truth and strive to do the will of God, belong to the soul of the Catholic Church, though they remain separated from her body. Those, however, who refuse to find out the truth, through indifference or other culpable motives, and those who know the Catholic Church to be the true and only Church of God, but who, for human considerations, do not join her, separate themselves from Christ and forfeit their eternal salvation. We must be willing to sacrifice everything—friends, a comfortable home, temporal goods, prospects in business—in order to follow Christ. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (St. Matth. x. 37). If God calls you to His Church, you must obey the summons. It will not do to be Catholic at heart; you are obliged to profess your religion publicly: "He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty" (St. Luke ix. 26).

We are not allowed to judge in a particular case and say, this one or that one is outside the Church by his own fault, and consequently beyond the hope of heaven. God alone, who is "searcher of

hearts and reins," and who "judges the secrets of men," knows the individual guilt.

Will all Protestants be lost? God forbid that any true Catholic should ever think or say so. No, we all know from experience that there are many of our separated brethren who are baptized and in invincible ignorance of the true Church, who firmly believe in Christ and expect salvation in His holy name. If, through no fault of their own, they remain outside the body of the Church, they will surely be saved, but only through the Catholic Church, to whose soul they belong, for

Out of the Catholic Church there is no Salvation.

VII.

Is one Church as Good as Another?

THIS is a senseless question. You might just as well ask me: Is one God as good as another? There is only one Church as there is but one God. "One body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 4--6). To maintain that all churches or all religions are equally good is to deny religion altogether. Truth and falsehood cannot be placed on the same

footing: what is right cannot be wrong at the same time. Truth is one and indivisible and unchangeable. Two and two will always be four; white will always be white, and black always black. Truth is exclusive: it never tolerates its opposite, as light banishes darkness. If I possess the truth, I must hold on to it and shun error. If I believe, as I sincerely do, that the Catholic religion is the true one, I am forced to believe that all other religions or churches are false, and I am obliged to cling to my Church at the risk of heaven. The other churches may teach some true doctrines and accomplish some good, but they remain false, and I can never approve of a falsehood.

We know how the different sects contradict each other: what one accepts the other rejects. Truth does not and cannot contradict itself. There is but one Gospel: "If any one preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 9). There is no room for different theories in religious matters, or for changing the creed or putting another meaning into it according to the wants of the age. "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day and the same forever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

Do not accept copper for gold or lead for silver; see that you get the genuine metal. Protestantism is as different from Catholicism as night from day. Be not content with the counterfeit, but make

sure that your have the real coin with the clear ring.

Not every road leads you to Rome, but only the one road which Christ has pointed out.

VIII.

Will the Bible Save Us?

THE Son of God tells me that I will be lost unless I believe. Yes, He commands me, under pain of eternal damnation, to believe, without hesitation or doubting, all He has taught. As He is a just God, He must give me the means to know what He has taught. He cannot condemn me for not doing a thing of which I know nothing. Which is the means that God has given us to know what He has made known for our belief? Our Protestant friends proudly point to the Bible as the pure and only source of faith. They say, it is a plain and intelligible book for all, and all have a right and are bound to interpret it for themselves. We Catholics maintain that God gave us the Church, and not the Bible, to teach us our religion, to tell us what God has revealed. The means to know religion must be within the reach of all, and adapted to the capacity of all. God wants all to be

saved, even the rudest and most ignorant and forsaken. All have a right to eternal salvation, and consequently to the means of salvation. These means must be infallible, so that man may be brought infallibly, without fear of error, to the knowledge of truth.

If Christ intended that all men should discover His religion from a book, might we not expect He should have either written that book Himself, or at least put it into the hands of His followers? Now He did not write or give it, but He commissioned His Apostles to preach. He said to His Apostles: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matth. xxviii. 18--20). The world was to be converted by the preaching of the Word, not by the reading of the Bible. Had Christ said: Write Bibles, spread them; let every one read and judge for himself, there would be no Church, but a city of confusion. He sent His Apostles as a teaching authority. And thus the Catholic Church existed and exercised her divine rights, before the Bible was completed, before a single word of the New Testament had been written. The Church was established and propagated

throughout the world without the Bible. For the first three hundred years the people could not know what was the Bible, which books were inspired and which were spurious. How could they take the Bible for their guide? And yet people knew their religion and were saved.

In the fourth century, the Pope of Rome assembled the bishops of the world in council and fixed the canon, that is, he gave us the Bible. There would be no Bible except for the Catholic Church. But even then the world was practically without the Bible until the art of printing was discovered by a Catholic in the fifteenth century. Before that time, it was difficult to get a Bible. Writing was a slow and costly operation. It was done with pen on parchment or sheepskin, and it cost a little fortune to procure a Bible. How could a merciful God oblige me to take the Bible for my guide, and condemn me if I could not afford to pay for one? Suppose everybody had a Bible, not everybody can read. Are the illiterate to be lost? Not all of those who can read understand Hebrew and Greek, in which the Bible was written. Who is to give you a correct translation? And suppose you had a correct translation, who is to give you the correct meaning? What does the history of the sixteenth century tell us about the effects of private interpretation?

Scarcely had Luther proclaimed his doctrine on private judgment and private in-

terpretation of the Bible, than his followers branched out into a variety of religious opinions different from those of their "apostle," so that the "Reformer" in his letter to the Christians of Antwerp exclaimed with bitterness: "One rejects Baptism; another the Eucharist; another constructs a new world between the present and that which will arise after the last judgment; some deny the divinity of Christ. One says this; the other that; *there are as many sects as there are heads.* Everybody imagines himself inspired by the Holy Ghost and wants to be a prophet."

Cardinal Hosius enumerated in the sixteenth century 270 different sects that originated from the principle of private interpretation.

Janssen, the historian, relates some practical Scripture interpretations of Luther's followers, about the year 1524. In St. Gall a number of men suddenly awoke to the significance of the divine precept, "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel." Accordingly they met in the town, and by mutual agreement rushed through the city gates toward the four quarters of the earth. In Appenzell twelve thousand persons assembled according to the text: "Do not care of what you shall eat," and abstained from food until hunger compelled them to disperse. Some climbed upon the roofs of houses and preached from their exalted stations

because Christ had said: "That which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops." Others again threw the Bible into the fire according to their interpretation of the divine word: "The letter killeth; the spirit vivifieth."

The Bible is not and cannot be the God-appointed teacher of religion. If, however, you do not know (as yet) her whom Christ authorized to give us the means of salvation, then I would entreat you, my friend, in the words of Our Lord addressed to the Jews: "Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting, and the same are they that give testimony of Me" (St. John v. 39). Search the Bible; do not merely glance at it; but read it in a prayerful spirit; study it and reflect on it with reverence and humility, with an earnest desire to find Christ and His holy spouse. The Bible will not reveal to you the true religion fully and finally; but it may render you an everlasting service; it may do for you what St. Andrew did for his brother St. Peter: it may and will bring you nearer to Jesus; it will tell you of the kingdom He founded on earth and of the necessity of belonging to the Church which He purchased at the price of His own blood. O grant it, divine Lover of souls!

IX.

Which is it: The Word of God or of Man?

THE Bible is a written document which in itself is the word of Almighty God. With regard to us, it becomes the word of God when rightly interpreted. A wrong explanation turns it into the word of man, and, St. Jerome continues, "what is worse, into the word of the devil;" for the devil can and actually did quote texts from Holy Scripture, to suit himself and tempt the Son of God. The Bible needs to be explained, so much the more, because it is full of difficulties and obscurities, not only for the uneducated, but for the most learned and talented. St. Peter tells us of the Epistles of St. Paul that there are in them "certain things hard to be understood which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction." St. Augustine confessed that there were more things in the Bible which he did not understand than things he did understand. What scholar in America dares claim the biblical knowledge of a St. Augustine? But who is to clear up the difficulties of the Bible and reconcile its apparent contradictions? Some one must give us the true sense,

We read in the Acts of the Apostles (viii. 31) that Philip was asked by the Ethiopian who was riding in a chariot and reading Isaias: "How can I understand, unless some man show me?" My own interpretation is a private interpretation and remains a personal, human opinion. No man, however learned he may be, can oblige me to accept his interpretation as a matter of divine faith; for he is human.

You answer perhaps: Read prayerfully: the Holy Ghost will enlighten you while reading, and give you the true understanding. How can you tell when the Holy Ghost is enlightening you or when it is the effect of your own brains? Does not such a crazy theory set people crazy? Does it not open the door to fanaticism, illusions, and deceptions, or, at best, to mere guesswork? Has not private interpretation distorted the Bible into absurdities and invoked it frequently to shield error and vice? Before the sixteenth century, it was universally looked upon as sheer insanity to prefer private interpretation to the decision of the whole body of Catholic bishops united to the See of Peter.

Instead of submitting to a silent book from which there is no appeal, or to a wise and learned man whose interpretation is but his own, we bow to the living authority of God's infallible Church, and accept her decisions as final. As the Jewish people went to the high priest and

his council to decide religious difficulties, so we go to the Church of Christ and ask her for the meaning of the Scriptures.

When George Washington and his associates wrote the Constitution and the supreme law of the United States, they did not intend that each citizen should take the document and explain it as each one thought best. Such a theory would do away with the Union in no time. They wisely appointed a Supreme Court and a Chief Justice who were to construe the true meaning of the Constitution, and all, from the President to the poorest and most ignorant citizen, are obliged to accept the decisions or interpretations of the Supreme Court. Thus Christ has appointed a Supreme Court and Judge to give us the true meaning of the Bible, to tell us what God has revealed and what He wants us to believe for our salvation. Both Judge and Court are infallible: the Pope and the Church.

The written and the unwritten word of God as interpreted and proposed by the Catholic Church forms the matter of our belief.

X.

The Catholic Church makes a great deal of the Bible.

THE Bible is a part of the divine revelation, written by inspired men, under

the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The other part of revelation is called the unwritten word of God or, briefly, tradition. The Bible is one of the two great sources of revealed truth from which the Church derives the materials of her dogmatic faith. It is a collection of precious truths,—of letters of the Creator to men on earth. We accept the Bible, from beginning to end, as the holy word of God. The Vatican Council, held in 1870, put the doctrine of the Church in concise words, when it declared: "The supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the universal Church, is contained in the written books, and in the unwritten traditions which have come to us as received orally from Christ Himself by the Apostles, or handed down from the Apostles taught by the Holy Ghost. And these sacred books of the Old and the New Testament are to be received as sacred and canonical, in their integrity and with all their parts. . . . If any one shall refuse to receive for sacred the books of Holy Scripture, with all their parts, or shall deny that they are inspired by God, let him be anathema." Do these words of the Council sound as if the Church made little of the Bible? Here she solemnly declares that a Catholic cannot be saved, unless he accepts every part of the Bible as the word of God.

At all times and in all places the Church has practically shown her love and

reverence for the written word of God, a love and reverence equal to that she has for the Incarnate Word. For centuries she kept thousands of learned and holy men engaged in translating and transcribing the Bible in letters of gold, on costly parchment; she had it bound in covers that withstood the gnawing tooth of time. No sooner was printing invented than she employed it in her great service, chiefly for the spreading of the Sacred Scriptures. And while she always guards against lawless and perverted translations, against arbitrary and impious interpretations, jealously watching over her holy trust, she cherishes the Bible lovingly, clings to it tenaciously, and interprets it infallibly.

In forbidding the private interpretation of the Bible, the Church deprives her children of no privilege or benefit. She only protects them against danger, so that they may read the Bible without fear of error, in the light of the Holy Ghost, who keeps the Church in the ways of truth. A sign of warning on a dangerous road or a lighthouse on the water are safeguards, not obstacles, to individual liberty.

The Catholic Church alone gives us a sure guarantee to the Bible. The great St. Augustine emphatically declares: "For my part I should not believe the Gospel, were I not moved thereto by the authority of the Catholic

Church." Protestants have their Bible, as far as they do have it, from the Catholic Church. All who admit the Bible as the word of God have to look to the Catholic Church, "the pillar and ground of truth," for the divine origin of the Scriptures.

Catholics are not forbidden to read the Bible in their mother tongue. On the contrary, they are encouraged to read and study it. The Catholic Bishops of the United States, assembled at the Third Council of Baltimore, thought it scarcely necessary to remind the Catholic people of this country that the most highly valued treasure of every family library should be the Holy Scriptures which God gave us for the comfort and direction of our life. They hoped that no Catholic family could be found in America without a correct version of the Bible.

The study of Scripture is looked upon, in our Catholic seminaries, as the most important in the course of theology. Pope Leo XIII. has recently urged a thoroughly scientific study of the Bible. The greatest biblical scholars, since the days of the Apostles, were loyal sons of the Catholic Church. Every priest is obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to spend about an hour each day in the perusal of Scripture by the recitation of the Divine Office, not to mention his daily meditation and his daily Mass and his private studies, which bring the Bible constantly before his mind and heart.

"At the present time," some of my Protestant friends say, "there is little to complain of. There is now more reading of the Bible among Catholics, owing to Protestantism. Martin Luther fortunately discovered a Bible in the sixteenth century, and ever since Catholics show more eagerness about it. Before Luther, Catholics were not allowed to read the Scriptures; the Bible was a sealed and unknown book to most Christians."

This is gratuitous talk; let us come to facts. The art of printing was invented eighty years before the Reformation. The first book printed was a Bible. Up to the year 1500, the Latin Bible had been printed more than a hundred times. Latin was then almost universally known and spoken. Fifteen versions in High German and five in Low German existed before Luther began his translation. According to Sir Thomas More, the Bible was read in English before Wickliff's time.

The author of a very solid and erudite work, "The History of the Reformation of the Church of England," Rev. J. H. Blunt, a Protestant clergyman, candidly confesses: "There has been much wild and foolish writing about the scarcity of the Bible in the ages preceding the Reformation. The facts are that the clergy and monks were daily reading large portions of the Bible, and had them stored up in their memory by constant recitation;

that they made free use of Holy Scripture in preaching, so that even a modern Bible-reader is astonished at the number of quotations and references contained in mediæval sermons; that countless copies of the Bible were written out by the surprising industry of cloistered scribes; that many glosses or commentaries were written which are still seen to be full of pious and wise thoughts; that all laymen who could read were, as a rule, provided with their gospels, their psalter, or other devotional portions of the Bible. Men did, in fact, take a vast amount of trouble with respect to the production of copies of the Holy Scriptures, and accomplished by head, hands, and heart what is now chiefly done by paid workmen and machinery. The clergy studied the word of God and made it known to the laity; and those few among the laity who could read had abundant opportunity of reading the Bible, either in Latin or in English, up to the Reformation period."

We Catholics cherish the written word of God as a source of divine revelation. But we are not painfully groping to discover the truth: we are in full possession of it. We are entitled to say with the immortal Dante:

"Either testament, the old and new, is ours,
and for our guide
The Shepherd of the Church. Let this suffice
to save us."

XI.

There are many Learned Men who do not believe in any Church.

Universal knowledge is impossible with man. One may be well informed in one branch of science, and be completely at sea in another. A man may be an expert in the legal profession, and have no knowledge of medicine or surgery. A man may pass for a great scientist, and be absolutely ignorant of religion and ignore the contents of the first five pages of a penny Catechism. Again, in these days of superficial education, many are called learned who know very little. And a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. "Knowledge is power. A little knowledge may lead to atheism; more knowledge brings the mind back to God" (Bacon). Most of our modern unbelievers are neither philosophers nor great scientists: they are men of letters; they write and talk well. True philosophy and science lead to God.

"Superficial culture, or a mere smattering of knowledge, to the neglect of all real study, is the more to be dreaded, now that the field of knowledge is so wide and that so much more is expected from educated persons; for in the very attempt to

master all subjects nothing is learnt. The ultimate product of shallow learning is a contempt for all higher knowledge and loftier aims, with its unfailing companion —gross and unrestrained immorality" (Becker). The truly learned are not self-sufficient and arrogant; they are humble and modest. They realize how little man can know; they do not pretend that knowledge came into this world with them. No real philosopher has ever relied on reason exclusively and rejected faith. The want of religion is a defect of the mind. To reject faith is to deprive reason of its greatest assistance.

History informs us that the master minds of the world have been religious; the shallow and haughty have stranded in the darkness of unbelief.

Against our infidel scientists who threaten to explode the indestructible Church of Christ we can marshal a galaxy of intellectual giants as devout Christians and real benefactors of the human race. St. Thomas, the most profound and universal genius of the Middle Ages, has abundantly proved to the thinking world the alliance between reason and faith. We may be proud, it is true, of the recent wonderful achievements in natural science, but we should not forget the words of Tyndall: "Of the origin and destiny of nature, science knows nothing." A dense obscurity hangs over our knowledge. "In science, as often as we advance, we find

an abyss; only weak minds believe that they can explain all and understand all" (Jules Simon).

Reflect on the words of the Holy Ghost: "All wisdom is from the Lord God" (Ecclus. i. 1).

XII.

"Indeed this was the Son of God."

NINETEEN hundred years ago there lived in Palestine a man, named Jesus Christ, who led a sinless life, taught a wonderful doctrine, wrought many miracles, but at the age of thirty-three years was nailed to a cross, because He staunchly maintained that He was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who, without suffering any change in His Godhead, took a human soul and a human body, and thus became the Redeemer of mankind. He confirmed this declaration by an oath before a competent tribunal. He was bound to answer the most important question ever asked on earth. On the answer depended the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. If He is only a child of God by adoption, a friend of God, His Son by grace, as every Israelite considered himself to be, then Christianity is a human religion, and nobody is obliged to accept it; but if He is really God as He said He

was, then everybody who wishes to be saved is bound to believe in Him and keep His Commandments.

Carefully notice the solemnity of the judicial proceedings against Christ in the palace of Caiphas. Bound and defenceless, Our Lord stood before the high priest, the highest ecclesiastical authority, the mediator between God and the Jewish people, who, standing out in the fulness of his God-given power, administered to Him the oath: "I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Christ could not be silent, and leave Himself open to misrepresentation; He had to reply. With cruel death in sight He gave the solemn answer which rolled louder than the thunder of Sinai through the council hall, and through all ages: "I am the Christ, the Son of God." His answer was to the point, and the supreme judge considered it useless to hear other witnesses: "Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy; what think you?" They answered with one accord: "He is guilty of death." He was condemned to death, He was crucified, why? Because He proclaimed Himself the only begotten of the Father, one in essence with Him, the promised Messias, the Saviour of the world. What honest or sane man will dare doubt the words of Christ? When in the days of the early persecutions a disciple of the Crucified was asked: "Art thou a Chris-

tian?" he would answer, in the sight of the sword, the pyre, the rack, the lion and leopard: "Yes, I am a Christian;" did anybody doubt his word?

Yes, we believe Thee, O Jesus, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. We know that there is nothing truer than Thy word. We thank Thee on our knees; we embrace Thy bleeding feet, and with the centurion who stood by the cross and saw Thee die, not as man dies, but as a God only can die, we strike our breast in humble contrition and say:

"*Indeed this was the Son of God.*"

XIII.

A Divine Person only could Save Us.

THE belief in Christ's divinity is the foundation of Christianity, which is the religion of the most civilized people for the last nineteen centuries. He who rejects the divinity of Our Lord must reject all that this religion has brought into the world, all the grand achievements in learning, art, and science,—all the light, peace, and happiness it has bestowed on millions.

Why should you refuse to believe that He is God? Is such a belief against reason? Not at all; human reason will

never be able to show its impossibility. The dogma of the Blessed Trinity involves no contradiction. We do not say: Three persons are one person. This would be against reason, and God could never oblige us to believe an absurdity. We say: Three persons have one and the same divine nature; there are three persons in one God. Neither is there a shadow of contradiction in the doctrine of the Incarnation. We believe that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took, in the womb of Mary, a human body and soul, not absorbing humanity in His divinity, but uniting the divine and human nature in one personality. We find even a similarity of this divine fact in nature around us. The plant appropriates the juices of the earth and the component parts of the atmosphere to make them its own. The rose constructs its beauteous form, and paints its leaves, and gilds its petals, and fills its chalice-cup with fragrance from the elements of earth, air, and water. Man sits down to his meal and feeds himself on bread, vegetables, etc., and these nutritive elements enter into the composition of his own substance. Why should I find it difficult to believe in the dogma of the Incarnation?

It is not only possible, according to reason, that God should assume human nature; it is even probable and meet that He should do so to save us from eternal ruin. God made Himself known in crea-

tion: He gave man the light of reason that he might find his God; but man forgot the Creator and adored idols, the personifications of his base desires. Man could abandon God, but he could not come back to Him without divine intervention. If the human race was to be saved, God had to step in Himself, and show us the true religion. It was worthy of His wisdom and mercy that He should walk on earth as man to show men how they should live as His children.

Besides, we were covered with the leprosy of sin. By sin, man sets himself up as an independent being, and substitutes his will for the will of God. It is the greatest evil imaginable; it entails an infinite debt. How can he discharge that debt? Will repentance do it? Repentance never rights a wrong. Will prayer or penance do it? God is just; He must demand satisfaction; He cannot permit His laws to be violated without penalty. Could the angels or the saints or Mary, the Queen of both, atone for sin? No, they are but creatures, and their merits are finite and limited, while sin is an infinite offence. God alone, assuming human nature, could wipe out the guilt. He had compassion on our misery: "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (St. John iii. 16).

XIV.

A Redeemer Promised and Expected.

When the just God expelled our first parents from Paradise, He took the poison of despair from their lonely hearts by the promise of a coming Redeemer. Continually the flickering hope is kept alive in human breasts by prophecies which gave the minutest details of the future Redeemer. All these prophecies were literally fulfilled. They are therefore rightly considered a solid proof of the divinity of Christ. The Jews always, up to date, uphold the divine authority of these prophecies, though they were often quoted against them by the Christian Church.

The genealogical tree of Christ is traced through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. "The time of His coming is fixed—when the sceptre has departed from Juda, after the expiration of the seventy year-weeks of Daniel, but while the second temple is still standing. The place of His birth is to be Bethlehem. He is to announce a joyful message to His people, to work great miracles and enter Jerusalem in triumph. Nevertheless He is to be betrayed by one of His disciples, and sold for thirty pieces of silver, which are then to be applied to the purchase of a potter's field. Abandoned

by His followers, accused before a tribunal, He shall not defend Himself. When condemned He is to receive blows on the cheek and to be spat upon; crucified between malefactors, mocked in His agony, and given gall and vinegar to drink; His garments are to be divided and lots cast for them; He is to be pierced with a spear, buried in the grave of a rich man, and godless men shall be set as a watch at His tomb. He shall nevertheless rise again, and because He has given His life for the sins of His people, He shall have a numerous posterity, and give a new law, and establish a kingdom in the knowledge of the true God, which shall embrace the earth" (Roh).

The divine origin of these prophecies have confirmed the Jews of old in their belief that the Messias was to be God in human form, the Man-God. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have produced them always as a strong argument in favor of Christ's divinity. Have they lost their convincing force in the twentieth century? What is true once, remains true forever.

XV.

The Most Beautiful among the Sons of Men.

THE moral greatness of Jesus baffles every description. The most glorious

saint grows dim and pale in His sight. It is said of Leonardo da Vinci that when he painted his most celebrated picture, the Last Supper, he grew discouraged and dropped his brush as he attempted to paint the figure of the Blessed Master. Christ alone could stand up in the midst of His deadliest enemies and calmly ask them: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" The judge that condemned Him was forced to declare publicly: "I find no fault in Him."

He appears before us in His sacred humanity without a parallel in the entire history of mankind, because He is more than man. Even His fiercest enemies of modern times, such as Baur, Strauss, Rénan, who shamelessly attack His divinity, are obliged to pronounce Him the holiest and wisest man that ever lived. "The first place remains reserved for Him in the temple of genius and humanity, as the unattainable ideal of moral greatness which can never be excelled" (David Strauss). He was never accused, by serious men, of having been a dreamer, enthusiast, or fanatic: He was faultless,—the ideal, the model man. Such is the verdict of infidels at the present moment.

The life of Our Lord is summed up in the pithy expression of Holy Writ: "Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1). As His work was a divine work, the redemption of the human race, so was His teaching divine, a divine doctrine

which was to save the world. The people said, after listening to Him: "Never did man speak like this Man" (St. John vii. 46). There is nothing so beautiful, pathetic, and forcible in all the literature of the nations as the parables and practical lessons of His Gospel. There had been great teachers and philosophers before Him in the world; there were Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, who taught beautiful things and charmed men with the sparkling brightness of their moods and the fascinating splendor of their language. Christ excelled them all by the purity, holiness, sublimity, and benevolence of His doctrine. Those great statesmen and philosophers never converted a nation, nor a city, nor a village, nor a single family from the curse of idolatry; they could not even rescue their own families from moral degradation. Christ changed the world with His doctrine, which is to last forever: "My words shall not pass" (St. Matth. xxiv. 35).

The oracle of modern unbelievers, Rousseau, cannot refrain from giving testimony to the Divine Teacher of men: "What severity, what sweetness, what purity in His manners! What touching peacefulness in His mode of instruction! What loftiness in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! What presence of mind, what subtlety, what exactness in His replies! How great the

command over Himself! Where is the philosopher who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? What blindness to compare Socrates to Jesus! What an infinite disproportion between one and the other! . . . The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed indeed the weeping executioner who ministered it; but Jesus, in the midst of His torments, prayed for His merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God." O, how we pity those who do not claim Jesus Christ as their friend and master! "Never to have known Jesus Christ is the greatest of misfortunes, but it involves no perversity or ingratitude. But, after having known Him, to reject or forget Him, argues such a horrible and insane wickedness as to be scarcely credible. For He is the origin and source of all good, and just as mankind could not be delivered but by the sacrifice of Christ, so neither can it be preserved but by His power" (Leo XIII.).

XVI.

The Works of Christ.

CHRIST did not only declare Himself the Son of God, but He pointed to His works as those of God. If you do not believe My words, He said to His enemies, then believe My works; for these give testimony of Me. His works were His divine credentials, by which He proved Himself the Supreme Ruler of the universe: "Go, and relate to John what you have heard and seen; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (St. Matth. xi. 4, 5). The objects of His miracles were the poor and suffering; the motive of working them was not to gratify curiosity or to display power, but to win those who were willing to believe in Him. His whole life was one series of miracles: He stills the tempest; He walks upon the sea; He curses the fig tree and it withers; He multiplies loaves and fishes to such an extent as to satisfy thousands; He changes water into wine; He gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleanses the leper and makes the lame walk. His miracles are subjected to the closest scrutiny of his enemies. Read the cure of the young man born blind in

the ninth chapter of St. John's gospel, and see if there be any possibility of explaining the miracle away. His wonders are related by eye-witnesses (I. St. John i. 1) who were not credulous. They were public facts known to all: "for," St. Paul continues, "neither was any of these things done in a corner" (Acts xxvi. 26), but in the presence of multitudes. They were wrought on the absent and on the present. He was conscious of the power that went out from Him.

It did not require much learning; it only required a sound understanding and the use of the senses to recognize a miracle in the blind man receiving his sight and in the man dead and buried coming back to life. "People were ignorant in those days." What? Why, the age of Our Lord was a most enlightened age, called the golden age of art and science. History records the names of the most cultured people in those days; some of the masterpieces then produced to the world serve as unsurpassed models for all times.

His fiercest enemies never ascribed those miracles to natural causes. Neither Jews nor pagans of the first centuries dared deny them as real facts. They were and still are the seal and witness of His mission and the evidence of His divinity.

The crowning proof of His divinity is His glorious resurrection from the dead. He said: "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again"

(St. John x. 18). Only God can make such an assertion and prove it. He pointed to His resurrection as to the principal argument of His divine nature. Fourteen times He foretold it, and His enemies knew His prediction; they remembered it well, as they confessed to the Roman governor, that He said He would rise from the dead. Now all, Christians, Jews, and Infidels, agree in this: The body of Christ was laid in a tomb, and on the third day after the burial it was there no longer. How did it get out of the tomb? The answer given by all is either by His own power or by the power of somebody else.

The Jews say the disciples stole His body, which is the denial of a historical fact and does not explain how He came back to life. Infidels say He came forth naturally, He had been in a swoon. But Our Lord really died on the cross. The four Evangelists record His death; so does St. Paul (I. Cor. xii. 12). His fearful sufferings made death a certainty, and His enemies, who would be satisfied with nothing less than death, made sure of it. The lance of Longinus piercing the dead Heart leaves no shadow of a doubt. Pilate made an official investigation of it. The ceremony of embalming the body excludes the possibility of life in the body.

He rose by His own divine power and was seen by many. His resurrection removes the slightest doubt about His divin-

ity. With St. Thomas we sink down on our knees before our risen Lord, and gratefully exclaim with a firm belief: "My Lord and my God!" He is our God and Saviour, our Lord and all, the life of our soul and the hope of our future. Without Him life would become a burden almost unbearable; in hours of great trials He alone can sustain the drooping heart. "In those supreme moments in human life, when eternity hangs in the balance, the grace of Jesus Christ is man's only hope. The form of the God-man, the incarnate manifestation of Divine Truth and Love, in His majesty and humility alike ineffable, in His sternness and gentleness, in His infinite condescension, His purity, His self-sacrifice, and the divine grace flowing from His Passion and death —all these alone enable man to triumph over the assaults of evil" (Hettinger).

XVII.

Do you believe in Miracles?

At the present time it is regarded as a sign of good breeding, as a proof of a higher education, to scoff at the supernatural, to laugh at miracles. Why? Because it is the age of superstition and infidelity. The firm and simple faith which seeks nothing beyond that which religion teaches is wanting in many. Superstition is easily traced to unbelief or false forms

of religion; it had been banished by the Church, but it partly returned with the Reformation. Something must be substituted for religion. People who refuse to believe in miracles believe in humbug. "Miracles are laughed at by a nation that reads thirty million newspapers a day and supports Wall Street" (Mr. Dooley's Philosophy). They believe in the "sacred rites" of Free-Masonry, in hypnotism, table-turning, spirit-rapping, clairvoyants, fortune-tellers, and Christian scientists, but they seem to deny Almighty God the right to work miracles. Such a denial is insane pride and is scarcely worthy of notice. "If a man were seriously to raise the question whether God can work miracles, we should show him far too much honor by answering him; it would be sufficient to order a place for him in a lunatic asylum" (Rousseau). Wicked men who assert that all nature is conducted by blind and fatal laws dread the idea of a miracle, because a miracle upsets the whole theory of atheism and pantheism.

A correct understanding of what a miracle is will remove a great deal of foolish prejudice. Let us ask the prince of theologians, St. Thomas, for a definition: "A miracle is an effect of divine power, surpassing wholly the course of nature, or an effect of divine omnipotence beyond the powers of any created cause." Three conditions are required to constitute a miracle; it must be an effect beyond the

power of any creature, operated in the natural order, and patent to the senses. Thus it is no miracle to see a dog walk, but it would be a miracle to see a mountain or a block of granite move of itself. It would be no miracle if a rosebush produced leaves or flowers, but it would be one to see a solid rock blossom. What is natural in one order, would be supernatural in another. What exceeds the nature of one, is suitable and natural to the other. Is not God above the order and powers of nature? Is anything difficult to Him? Can He not do more than all created things?

Moreover, God uses secondary causes to produce certain effects. He makes the harvest depend on the toil of the farmer, the stability of a house on the skill of the architect and workmen. Will anybody forbid Him to produce such effects directly, that is, without using secondary causes?

God does not upset the laws and order of nature by working miracles. Nature works by the forces that God has placed in it; it follows the laws that God prescribed for it. What is to prevent God from working without these natural forces?

He does not thereby go against nature, but beyond nature. He does not, strictly speaking, suspend the laws of nature by a miracle, but He simply overcomes a lower force by a higher one. But are not the laws of nature unchangeable? Certainly

not; they are uniform and unchanging, but they are not unchangeable. Does not God change when He hears a prayer? God can never change. Prayer is one of the necessary conditions in the plans of divine Providence to bring about certain results. Many things therefore depend on prayer; its effects are no miracles, but the simple production of second causes. When there is question of a miracle, we have to ascertain two things: Has it really happened? Is it a true miracle, fulfilling the essential conditions?

Miracles are necessary in religion. God had to accredit His messengers before men. He gave the power of miracles to Moses and the prophets, and Christ gave it to His Apostles. When God occasionally in the history of mankind shows by miracles that He is the Lord of nature, He has His holy and special reasons to do so. He wrought them to establish His religion on earth, and St. Augustine remarks, "The greatest of all miracles would be to convert the whole world without a miracle."

I believe in miracles, because I believe in God and in common sense.

XVIII.

Do Miracles happen in Our Days?

MANY of our non-Catholic friends willingly admit as real the miracles recorded in the Bible, but they maintain that the age

of miracles is past and that the Catholic Church possesses no power to work miracles. Then there are those who deny even the miracles of the Bible or pretend to explain them away by modern science. The secret powers and laws of nature, they say, are now made known, and the miraculous therefore disappears. There is not a miracle, so called, of the Bible which cannot be explained in a natural way. We hereby challenge all those who belong to this latter class to explain one single miracle in the Bible as a natural phenomenon, and we demand of them, as we expect every teacher of natural science to do, to show us by making the experiment that a recorded miracle of the Bible is a natural phenomenon. As long as they fail to do so, we brand them as mountebanks and malicious charlatans. We know as much about natural forces, the origin and destiny of nature, as the people in whose days the miracles of the Bible were wrought. If modern science has destroyed the miraculous, how can a man *now* heal diseases by imposition of hands? How can he give sight by rubbing clay in the eyes? How can he hush a storm into a deep calm by a word of his mouth or a wave of his hand? How can he bring back to life the real dead? Explain on natural grounds, if you can, by your vaunted science, or hide your ignorance in shame and silence.

Miracles did not cease with the Apos-

tles; they are found, and always have been found, in the Catholic Church. The gift of miracles abides with the true Church, and whenever they are needed, they are performed. They were especially needed at the beginnings of the Church to establish her divine origin, but now when she herself is a standing miracle in her unity and continuity, the necessity of frequent miracles does not appear. The tree needs watering, St. Gregory explains, as long as it is weak and young, not when it has grown to maturity. But miracles, though less frequent, continue in the Church to the present hour. "Who has not heard of the abundant favors gained by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and of the marvellous consequences which have attended the invocation of St. Anthony of Padua? These phenomena are sometimes related of saints as taking place in their lifetime, as well as after death, especially if they are evangelists or martyrs. The wild beasts crouch before their victims in the Roman amphitheatre; the axe-man is unable to sever the head of St. Cæcilia from her body. St. Francis Xavier turns salt water into fresh for five hundred travellers; St. Raymond is transported over the sea on his cloak; St. Andrew shines brightly in the dark; St. Scholastica gains by her prayers a pouring rain; St. Paul is fed by ravens; and St. Frances beholds her guardian angel" (Card. Newman).

The account of the miracles constantly wrought at the shrine of Our Lady at Lourdes, in France, cannot be gainsaid; unbelievers have been constrained to bear an unwilling testimony.*

It has been asked: Why does not God, if He wishes people to believe and be saved, perform some glorious miracle in our midst, and thereby banish all possible doubt from the minds of thinking men? Because it would not help them in the least; it would not convert them to the truth. He who knows the nature and character of all men, the Son of God Himself, gave us the best answer in the parable when He said: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead" (St. Luke xvi. 31).

* The most recent miracle in this country was recorded in the *Providence Visitor*, July 20, 1901, under the heading: "Wonderful Cure of a Nun."

"An ecclesiastical inquiry is in progress at the Maryville Convent of the Nuns of the Sacred Heart, into the alleged miraculous cure of Sister Catherine Burke of a cancerous tumor when she was believed to be at the point of death. This cure was pronounced by attending physicians to be unexplainable from a medical standpoint.

"The investigation has been conducted with the greatest secrecy. When the evidence has all been taken it will be sealed and forwarded to Rome, where it will be examined and a decision given as to whether the cure was of natural or supernatural cause.

"Sister Burke is thirty-six years old. Two

XIX.

Will a Man be Damned if He Refuse to Join the Catholic Church?

A MAN who belongs to a non-Catholic denomination begins to have serious doubts as to whether his religion is right or wrong. His reason tells him that one religion only can be right; he is not sure that he is a member of the right one. This

years ago when stationed at Omaha she became afflicted with a stomach trouble. Physicians said she had a cancerous tumor. Upon returning to St. Louis she grew rapidly worse. Her doctor said her only chance was to have an operation performed, but she was so weak that the idea was abandoned. She sank rapidly, and her death was daily expected. The last sacraments of the Church were administered.

"The Sisters decided to make a novena to Mother Barat, founder of the Order of the Sacred Heart. Mother Barat was a holy woman and the initial step had been taken in her canonization. Several cures have been attributed to her intercession, and she has been denominated venerable. The Sisters prayed for nine days and placed a garment that had been worn by Mother Barat on Sister Burke.

"On the morning of the ninth day, it is stated, Sister Burke rose from bed entirely cured, dressed herself, and reported to the Mother Superior for duty. She is now in perfect health."

man is obliged, at the penalty of being damned eternally, to inquire into the grounds of his belief: he should read, consult, reflect, or use other available means, at the same time that he asks for light and strength from above. If he be a man of sincerity and earnestness, he will soon meet arguments and facts that will aid him to clear away difficulties. He will notice, for instance, that men of clean lives, of great learning and noble aspirations, leave the various Protestant communities and join the Catholic Church, though they have to sever ties of fondest affections, lose their means of living, renounce lucrative positions, and incur the disrespect of many. On the other hand, he has observed that such only leave the Catholic Church as are proud and self-willed, worldly and disloyal, with the prospect of being warmly received in the Protestant camp and generously treated by the enemies of the Church. And yet this man continues in his doubts and perplexities. He makes no real effort to come into possession of the full truth, though he realizes that it is a question of hell or heaven, that man is bound to serve his Creator in the religion which God gave us. He suspects that the Catholic Church is God's Church and all other denominations are human inventions. But he has no desire to trouble himself with religion, and he is determined to take his chances when death arrives. Or suppose he does inquire

and study to find out more about the Catholic Church, and he learns, to his great surprise, that she is not the monster described to him by her enemies; he is drawn to her by the unity and solidity of her doctrine, by the justness of her laws and the beauty of her rites; but he is not anxious to join her, because it would make a painful change in his life; it would break up delightful associations and important business relations; it would disturb the peace and comfort of many dear to him. Could God ask so great a sacrifice of him? He is determined to lead an honest life, to be kind and generous to the poor, and—to remain in the religion in which he was brought up. What more could he do? Ah, wretched and deluded man, he does nothing for the next world. He consults his own temporal interests; he cares little for God; he does what he likes and not what God desires him to do. Why should God give heaven to him who does not care for it, who does not take the trouble to inquire about the road that leads to it? He loves his present comfort more than God. The religion of Christ should have been dearer to him than life itself. He will discover it when it is too late.

Trifle not with the grace of God. Open your soul to the rays of divine light. All things are vain and unprofitable, if you have not the truth, at which you must aim to win the prize. Be willing to sacrifice

everything for truth's sake. If you have done your duty, with the light of reason and with the light of the Holy Ghost, and if you have found the spouse of Christ, the Catholic Church, you must embrace her religion and submit to her guidance or —perish forever.

XX.

"Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us Sinners."

THERE is but one God; Mary is a mere creature. She is the work of His hands, infinitely below the Almighty and in comparison to His infinite majesty less than a grain of sand to the highest mountain. And yet, as a creature, Mary is the masterpiece of all creation. In all His wisdom and power, God could not create a higher and nobler being than Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. God made Mary what she is: to Him we give the credit for all of Mary's dignity and prerogatives.

Mary is the Mother of God, because she is the Mother of Christ, who is truly the Son of the living God. She is not the Mother of the divinity of Our Lord; she is the Mother of His humanity, of the human body He took from her. But as the divinity and humanity are united in the one personality, Jesus Christ, Mary

is truly His Mother, the Mother of God. We cannot believe in the Incarnation or rather in the divinity of Our Lord and Saviour without giving Mary the title and honor of Mother of God. History illustrates this statement. In the early centuries of Christianity, heretics arose who denied that Christ was really God. This dreadful denial drove them to rob Mary of her glorious title of Mother of God. The Reformers of the sixteenth century began the opposite way: they refused to honor Mary as Mother of God; they soon began to doubt the divinity of her Son. How many Protestant ministers are there to-day who firmly believe and loudly proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Almighty God Himself? Mary is so intimately connected with the history of religion that to take her away from it would be to reduce Christianity to a cold and barren system of Rationalism. With Mary began the work of our Redemption; in that work she holds a special position, far above angels and saints, inferior to God alone. All her glory, however, is derived from her Son and God, just as the light of the silvery moon is borrowed from the golden sun. Through the merits of her Son and Redeemer she enjoys the unique privilege of her immaculate conception. She was always free from original sin; she was never, even for an instant, under the power of Satan. She stands before us in her stainless purity and sinless beauty

as the unequalled ideal of human perfection. The Protestant poet Wordsworth was enchanted with her immaculate charms when he sang of her:

"Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
Woman! above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost,
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast."

We Catholics love and honor Mary more than any other created being. God Himself gave us the example in this. He sent an angelic messenger to the Virgin of Nazareth to greet her in His own name and to pay homage to her as the chosen tabernacle of His Son: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women" (St. Luke i. 28). Elizabeth was enlightened by the Holy Spirit to repeat the self-same greeting: "Blessed art thou among women," and to add: "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb," and to exclaim in astonishing humility: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (St. Luke i. 43). Mary herself, fully understanding the exalted dignity to which she had been raised, and casting a prophetic glance into all future ages, sang

triumphantly: "Behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (St. Luke i. 48). Since these words were first uttered, the praises of Mary have sounded over land and sea, and will only cease to be heard when time shall be no more. In every century, in every clime, Mary, the Mother of God, has been called blessed among all women; love and devotion to her have been the badge of every true and devout Christian. All generations have brought her the tribute of affection and have proclaimed her the Queen of saints and angels. The brightest intellects in Christian history have devoted their talents to promoting the honor of Mary. Poets have crowned their immortal songs with her sweet name: the greatest painters have dipped their brush in the glowing colors of her maternal love and perpetuated her all-transcending charms. Kings and nobles, men of influence and wealth, have renounced thrones and honors, to become the more detached servants of Mary. Grand cathedrals, precious shrines, monasteries, universities, hospitals, and asylums, erected in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, cover the world and are standing testimonies of a universal admiration for her. All that is best and fairest in nature gives praise to Mary and symbolizes her virtues: she is the Lily of the valley, the Rose of Sharon, the Morning Star, the House of God, the Star of the Sea. The month of flowers and

song is her own. Three times a day, at morning, noon, and evening, consecrated bells ring from lofty church towers over hill and dale, inviting millions of her children to recite the Angelus. Oh, the power of this prayer accompanied by the hallowed voice of the bell! There is no music on earth that has done so much to soften hearts and raise drooping spirits as the Angelus. It has been and always will be a most powerful factor in bringing peace and tranquillity into this weary, restless world. It had power, for a time, to charm the impious heart and the proud mind of Byron, when he sang:

"Ave Maria! blessed be the hour,
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt the moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft!
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint, dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer!
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!
Ave Maria! may my spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son above."

Mary has become especially the type and model of Christian womanhood, uniting to a mother's love, a maiden's purity,

"So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure."
—LONGFELLOW.

Her fascinations, however, are not merely

pleasing to the senses; they affect the spiritual side of those who reflect upon them. Mary's beauty is not "like earthly beauty, dangerous to look upon, but like the morning star, bright and musical, breathing purity, telling of heaven, and infusing light" (Newman). It is impossible to honor Mary, to pray frequently to her, to meditate on her privileges and magnificence, without growing better and stronger in faith and coming nearer to Our Lord and Saviour.

How can you refuse to honor her and still call yourself a disciple of Christ, her divine Son? How can you believe in the Gospel and not call Mary the Mother of God? What false prophet has thrown dust into your eyes to prevent you from seeing her all-surpassing glory? Have you forgotten what she suffered for us? For you and me, Mary became homeless, friendless, and childless. Remember her sorrows; remember also how when He was hanging upon the cross and dying for our sins, He gave us His Mother to be our Mother. Thank your blessed Saviour for the great gift, and begin to ask her intercession. Yes, give it a trial. Ask her for the true faith. "It was never known that any one flying to Mary's protection, imploring her help or seeking her intercession, was left unaided" (St. Bernard).

XXI.

The Saints Hear Our Prayers.

Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is our only mediator of redemption and also of intercession by His own rights and merits. The Catholic Church ends all her prayers with the words: "Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord." The saints in heaven are called mediators and intercessors in an entirely different sense; they are such only by the merits of Our Lord, by a special power from God. In this sense Moses could say to the people of Israel: "I was mediator, and stood between the Lord and you" (Deut. v. 5).

It had been the strong belief of the Jews of old that the saints in heaven pray for their brethren on earth (II. Mach. xv. 14), and the Catholic Church, which has succeeded to the heritage of the synagogue, has formulated her doctrine on this point in the following concise words: "The saints who reign with Christ offer to God prayer for men; it is good and useful to invoke them in an humble manner and to fly to them for aid and assistance." This teaching is no barren article of the Creed; it is part and parcel of Catholic life and feeling; it is the

golden link that binds us to the invisible kingdom where we are to live and reign forever. We love and honor the saints, the dear children of God, not independently of Him, but because He honored them and surrounded them with glory.

St. James writes: "The continual prayer of the just man availeth much" (v. 16). St. Paul asked the Christians of Rome to pray for him (Rom. xv. 30). If we may ask the prayers of good people on earth, why should we not invoke the assistance of the saints in heaven, who are so near to God?

Do they hear us? The angels hear us; they rejoice over the conversion of sinners (St. Luke xv. 7). Christ tells us that the just in heaven are like the angels of God (St. Matth. xxii. 30). They hear and see all things in God; this is the best explanation we can give. The Scripture informs us that when Moses was on the mountain, away from the people, God showed him how they had fallen into the sin of idolatry and that He would destroy them on account of it. They were spared at the prayer of Moses (Exodus xxxii.). The saints notice, as in a mirror, all that is passing on earth. They are deeply interested in all that concerns us, in our spiritual and temporal welfare.

In praying to the saints, we lift our hands and hearts to those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They were of

the same clay as we are; they were surrounded by the same temptations, those of the world, the flesh, and the devil. They might have lived wicked lives and died as reprobates; they triumphed with the grace of the blessed Redeemer. They know how to sympathize with us; for they know from experience how weak is human nature and how strong the power of evil. And looking down from the golden thrones, they watch the issue of the struggle and help us to victory by their example and intercession.

XXII.

Relics.

We honor the relics of the saints as precious remains. They recall to our minds noble lives, full of virtue and heroic deeds. They possess no hidden power in themselves, but God often makes them the vehicle of His favors. Far from being idolatrous, the honor which we pay to the relics of the saints redounds upon God, whose servants they are. St. Jerome argues with Vigilantius in this way: "Not only do we not adore the relics of the martyrs, but we do not even adore the angels, the archangels, the cherubim, and seraphim. Yet we honor the relics

of the martyrs that we may adore Him whose martyrs they are. We honor the servants, that the honor bestowed on them may redound to their Master." In the same meaning St. Augustine wrote to Quintian: "I send you the relics of St. Stephen, the martyr, which you will honor as it is proper."

God sometimes does bestow a miraculous power on the bones and other relics of His saints. What is to prevent Him from doing it? A dead man who was placed in the tomb of Eliseus was restored to life as soon as he touched the bones of the prophet (IV. Kings xiii. 21). God communicated a marvellous power to the mantle of Elias, to the shadow of St. Peter, to the handkerchiefs and aprons of St. Paul. The many miracles wrought at the tombs and by the touch of the relics of the saints prove that the honor shown to them is agreeable to God.

The Catholic Church has always taken great care to prevent fraud and abuse with relics. She does not certify to their genuineness without careful examination by competent officials. If travellers are shown incredible relics in museums or ancient Catholic churches, now perverted into meeting houses, or if they read some funny stories about saints, relics, and miracles in guide-books, they should know that such legends and relics are the malicious inventions of the enemies of our Holy Church. All good things may be abused.

The holiest has been dragged into the dust. How could saints escape the scorn of the impious? This will not keep us from giving them the tribute of our love and devotion, even at the risk of being ridiculed and belied. Hear what one of the greatest scholars, Cardinal Newman, said about relics: "I think it impossible to withstand the evidence which is brought for the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. I see no reason to doubt the material of the Lombard crown at Monza; and I do not see why the Holy Coat at Treves may not have been what it professes to be. I firmly believe that portions of the True Cross are at Rome, and the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul also. I firmly believe that the relics of the saints are doing innumerable miracles and graces daily, and that it needs only for a Catholic to show devotion to any saint in order to receive special benefits from his intercession."

XXIII.

Pray for the Suffering Souls.

We believe in purgatory. We believe in a middle state between heaven and hell, in which those are detained in suffering who have venial sins to atone for

or some debt of temporal punishment to pay. Nothing undefiled shall enter heaven. Those who die in mortal sin are condemned to the everlasting flames of hell; those who die in venial sin, or with an unpaid temporal debt, shall first have to pass through the cleansing fire of purgatory before they are admitted to the abode of eternal bliss. We know the purifying effect of suffering, patiently borne. The souls in purgatory are preparing to meet their God, in perfect purity and sanctity. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church for the last nineteen centuries. Even before Christ, the Jewish Church believed in purgatory and prayed for the dead, as the Jews at the present day do. We learn from the second book of the Machabees, that the brave commander Judas ordered a collection of money and sent it to Jerusalem that sacrifice should be offered for the soldiers who had fallen in battle, adding: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."

It seems useless to allude to the scandalous stories originated by wicked men and circulated among non-Catholics concerning purgatory. No respectable Protestant believes any longer in the insulting charges made against Catholic priests, insinuating that they preach this doctrine for the purpose of extorting money from the poor and ignorant people.

The teaching of the Church rests on the doctrine of Holy Scripture, as the early Fathers clearly demonstrated. They point to the words of Our Lord in St. Matthew (v. 25, 26), and to the epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (iii. 11--15), to which we refer him who has the least misgiving about it. From the words of Our Lord, "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come" (St. Matth. xii. 32), St. Augustine argues that, "It would not have been said with truth that their sin shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next, unless some sins were remitted in the world to come."

When we stand at the open grave of a loved one, the prayers for him come spontaneously to our lips as the tears start unbidden to the eyes. We would have to do ourselves violence not to pray for the dear departed. Individually we know not who goes to purgatory; but "this is not to be doubted, that the dead are aided by prayers and the sacrifice of the Mass, and by almsgiving; for this, which has been handed down by the Fathers, the universal Church observes" (St. Aug.). Whom are you to believe, the apostate monk of the sixteenth century or the universal Church of God? Follow your natural instinct and Christian sentiments. Remember your dead friends. Pray for the souls in purgatory.

XXIV.

The Tribunal of Mercy.

When St. John first met our divine Saviour during His public ministry, he pointed Him out in those significant words: "Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him that taketh away the sins of the world." Christ came to atone for sin and to destroy it, leaving its antidote in the confessional.

We were born in sin. The mercy of the Lord met us at the threshold of life and led us to the baptismal font, where we were cleansed from sin and became the children of God. We grew up to the age of reason and learned to distinguish between right and wrong. So great is the frailty of human nature, so strong the power of temptation, that few retain their baptismal innocence. What would become of us if God had not provided for a second means of purification in confession? Ah, truly "with Him there is mercy and plentiful redemption!" Approach the confessional and behold the ways of divine mercy. A man, steeped in mortal sin, the slave of Satan, enters and kneels at the feet of a fellow-creature in whom he recognizes the priest of Christ. He makes the sign of the saving cross; he opens his

heart, and with a low and contrite voice narrates his secret shame and hidden crimes against God and man. And the judge patiently listens to the awful tale of woe and misery. He does not shrink from the revolting scene unfolded before his eyes: he too is human and sinful and encompassed with infirmity. After carefully examining the wounds and probing their danger, the priest pronounces words of absolution and the precious blood of the Redeemer bedews the sinner's soul, washing away every stain of guilt. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the chains fall from the sinner: he is free; the evil spirits have sped away; he is the dear child of God; from a devil he is changed into an angel. Such is confession in the Catholic Church.

The sinner is like a sick man who, if he would be cured, must make known the nature of his sickness and show his festering sores to a skillful and experienced physician and surgeon. A simple manifestation of repentance or a general avowal of sinfulness will not suffice. Our Lord chose men to sit in judgment, to bind and to loose. If confession were not required, then the words of Christ instituting confession would have no meaning. The power of the priest is not absolute, but ministerial. He is the embassador of Christ and responsible to Him for the handling of His power. He must know the condition of the soul; he has to dis-

miss the sinner who comes without the proper dispositions. He who comes to confession without sorrow and without a firm purpose of amendment cannot be forgiven. Before forgiving or retaining, the priest must know the condition of things. No honorable judge will condemn or dismiss a man before hearing his case.

But, it is to be observed, Christ did not institute confession by way of strict and inexorable justice, but by way of mercy and indulgence. Wherefore the priest does not sit in the confessional to condemn the poor sinner and deliver him into the hands of divine justice. He listens to the case without a word of reproach or surprise; he simply warns him about dangerous symptoms; he binds up the bleeding wounds and sends the sinner away with the assurance of complete pardon. And in this the will of the merciful Master is carried out; for He said: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (St. Matth. ix. 13). "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matth. xi. 28). "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance" (St. Luke xv. 10).

XXV.

Must I Confess my Sins to a Priest to be Forgiven?

THERE are many non-Catholics who object to confession, because they consider it unreasonable, if not impious and unbecoming, to confess secret sins to a man even though he have the priestly character. Would they still object to the practice of confession, if they found out that God had invested men with the power of forgiving sin in order that people should make use of such power? They would certainly withdraw their objections, because they would not resist God, whose holy will they anxiously seek to accomplish in all things. Now we Catholics firmly believe that God has given the absolving power to men on earth, that it is His holy will that we should make use of this power for the forgiveness of our sins. This is the ordinary and only way of obtaining pardon and of being reconciled with the Lord. There is no other means left to us for the remission of grievous sins, except to kneel at the feet of a validly ordained and duly authorized priest, to tell him our sins and to receive his absolution. Only in case of extreme necessity, where confession is impossible,

may we have direct recourse to God and expect forgiveness by an act of perfect contrition, a hearty sorrow for sin, purely for God's sake.

Confession may not be pleasant in itself for the sinner: it is a curative of the soul; an operation necessarily required. Generally speaking, medicines are bitter and surgical operations are painful, and people do not take them and submit to them for mere amusement.

In confession the Lord has provided a most suitable and effective remedy for our spiritual ailments. Why? The beginning of all evil, the source of all sin, is pride, which is rebellion against God and a wilful renunciation of His sovereignty. Pride leads us away from God; humility brings us back to Him. Confession is that painful and wholesome humiliation which brings about the justification of the sinner.

God required confession from the commencement of our race. He was the first confessor; and the first penitents that came to confession were Adam and Eve. They confessed, though somewhat imperfectly, and they were forgiven. Cain refused to confess his great sin, and the Lord God cursed him and marked him as impenitent. David confessed his crimes to the prophet Nathan, and he was instantly forgiven.

Why does human justice require the confession of guilt? Why is the criminal

forced into court to make his confession, although his crime is evident? Through confession the culprit is separated from his wicked deed. We feel that temporal punishment has no expiatory effect, until the guilty one has confessed. Sin is the poison of the soul. The poison must be rejected before a cure can be effected.

It is surprising that even "Bible Christians" object to the Catholic practice of confessing to a priest. Let them open the Bible and read the book of Leviticus (chapters iv.--vii.) and they will learn that, according to the law, the sinner who wished to be reconciled to God had to go to the priest who was to offer sacrifice for his sins in proportion to their malice and greatness. The sinner was obliged to specify, or rather to reveal or confess, the quantity and quality of his sins; he had to indicate the number and different kinds of his sins. Such a confession was to be sincere and free from false shame. "For thy soul be not ashamed to say the truth; for there is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace" (Ecclus. iv. 25). It is a shame to commit sin; it is an honor to own up to it and to confess it. Again the Scripture says: "He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper; but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13). The priest of the Old Dispensation, however, did not forgive sins; he could not impart absolu-

tion. He merely determined and explained the conditions under which God would forgive sin.

Christ came to perfect the law. He really gave a judicial power to the priests of the New Law. He came into this world to seek and to save the lost sheep, to pardon sinners, to heal the wounded and contrite heart. He communicated His mission and His power of remitting sin to His Apostles and their successors in the priesthood. He appeared to the Apostles after His resurrection, as St. John (xx. 21--23) informs us, "He breathed on them and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Now, all Christians admit that Christ, the Son of God, could forgive sin; that He could delegate this power to men; that He did give this power to His Apostles. The question comes: Did this power of absolution die out with the Apostles or did it remain and continue in the world? If it stopped with the Apostles, then the work of Redemption ceased with them. Let me ask another question: Was the Constitution of the United States intended for those only who framed it and their contemporaries? Were the blessings of this government to cease with George Washington? The power of absolution still abides with the priest. The Catholic Church has taught in every century, since the days of the Apostles, and

all her children, for over 1900 years, have believed with St. John, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity."

XXVI.

Is Confession a License for Sin?

PERHAPS you have seen people going to confession in church on a Saturday evening and you have noticed how quickly sinners are dispatched. It is the work of two or three minutes, and absolution is granted and the penitent leaves the confession box with a light heart and radiant face. It appears more than easy to throw off a load of sin, and to be free for a new harvest.

It is true that the change wrought in confession is quickly effected. A long life of sin is blotted out in an instant. In fact, the marvellous works of God are brief in space as they are wonderful in their effect. "He spoke, and there was light." His divine plans are accomplished in silence; for He is not in the whirlwind nor in the storm, but in the gentle breeze. The greatest event in all history, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, takes place in an obscure country town with the knowledge of one single human being,

our Immaculate Lady. He enters the world at midnight, when nature is in its deepest quiet and the world hushed in slumber; then He is born of Mary, in the stable of Bethlehem. And while on earth, behold, how quickly He performs His great deeds of mercy! One loving word cleanses the sin-stained heart of Mary Magdalen; one step brings salvation into the house of Zachæus; one merciful look converts the heart of the unfaithful Peter. Thus, two brief acts only are requisite and sufficient to ensure the sinner's forgiveness: an act of clemency and condescension of God, reaching down to the sinner, and an act of sorrow and humiliation on the part of the sinner, leading up to God. It is an easy way to obtain forgiveness; its institution is worthy of the merciful Master. Notice, however, though the act of confessing and absolving may be brief, the work of preparation for confession covers some time.

And yet, confession does not smooth the road to sin nor is it a license for it or an encouragement to commit it. It is absolutely impossible that confession should make sin easy or foster vice. Confession is the ordinance of the blessed Saviour who came to destroy sin, and not to open the door for it. If a sinner rids himself of a heavy load of sins by a single confession, it is because he detests them and is firmly determined not to commit them again. He knows that he cannot

presume on divine mercy, saying to himself: It matters little whether I fall back into the same sins; I can come to confession again. His next mortal sin may be his last one. He is aware that his life hangs on a thread, and if he falls again, God may cut that thread, before he has time and grace to repent and confess.

Far from being an incentive to sin, confession is the best moral check upon the human conscience, as it reminds man of his sacred obligations to his Maker and gives him self-knowledge and a sense of humility. It has been fitly called the safeguard of the Gospel Law. The impious Voltaire, who regarded it merely as a human affair, said: "There is no more useful institution than confession; if it did not exist it should be invented and introduced immediately." Luther preached against the necessity of confession, and his "doctrine" was unfortunately welcome to many in his days; but he bitterly complained of the decay of morality and openly regretted that he had abolished the confessional.

Confession is the fruit of Christ's Passion and death; it is one of the greatest blessings that God conferred on sinful man; it is a never-failing source of light and strength, of peace and happiness, to millions of souls.

XXVII.

The Confessor's Fee.

I CONFESS to God alone, our Protestant friend says. I do not want any one to come between my God and my conscience. I shall have no priestly interference. Well, as long as a man ignores the nature and necessity of confession, he is not supposed to be anxious to confess his sins to a priest. We confess to God alone, every day, when we make our examination of conscience. We allow nobody to know the affairs of our conscience except the one who takes the place of God. The priest does not meddle or interfere with our private matters. He strictly minds his own business and tries to attend to it faithfully. If you were brought into court for violating the civil law and the judge questioned you about it and told you to confess your guilt, would you answer him, to keep out of your affair and not to meddle with your private business? Is not the priest the divinely constituted judge to regulate the matters of conscience? When you have sinned grievously and have justly deserved the flames of hell for your lasting inheritance, has God any personal interest that you should seek His pardon? Does He need you?

If, He, in His infinite mercy, offers you pardon conditionally, will you deny His right to put a condition upon you? His condition is that you go to the priest, His ambassador, and with an humble and contrite heart confess your sins to him and they will be blotted out forever. Oh, the mercy of the Lord! He sends us to a priest,—not to an angel, to one of those bright and pure spirits of heaven who could not know from experience what human weakness means, but to a fellow-creature, a sinner, who can condole with us and have compassion with our infirmities, who will never betray our confidence, who will lock up in his breast our secrets and take them with him to the grave.

Through confession the all-wise God satisfies the longings of human nature. He knows that we want to tell somebody the anxieties of our heart, and our shortcomings and transgressions, and at the same time we do not want to tell them. We wish to tell them as if they were never told; "we wish to tell them to one who is strong enough to bear them, and yet not too strong to despise us; to one who can relieve us of our load, who can advise and sympathize with us. Such a one we find in the confessional. How many a Protestant's heart would leap with joy at the news of such a benefit" (Newman).

What remuneration do Catholics make to the priest for hearing their confessions? I would not allude to such a trivial ques-

tion, did I not know from personal experience how many non-Catholics of the present day are still under the impression that the priest receives a regular fee for every confession he hears. The priest is not permitted to accept money when hearing confessions, even if it were offered spontaneously; he is obliged, by a special law, to refuse any offering in the confessional. It does not cost anything to go to confession; but it costs a great deal to hear confession. It requires a deal of self-denial and labor on the part of the priest. What is more trying and taxing on the patience of the priest than to sit for long hours and to bear with all sorts of people and to dwell in the midst of contamination, to look into the graveyard of the human soul and not to shudder at the ghastly sight of corruption? But the priest has the grace of state: he leans on the strong arm of the divine Master, and thus braving the difficulties and dangers of the confessional he reaps its merits and consolations. He is ever ready to shrive the sinner, at the risk of health and life. It may be a person afflicted with a contagious disease that requests his service, and death may be staring him in the face: a soul is to be cleansed from sin and he will sacrifice all to do it. How many priests have fallen victims to the duties of the confessional! And, oh, how many souls have been saved from eternal woe by the ministry of the priests of God!

XXVIII.

The Real Presence.

NINETEEN hundred years ago, the eternal Son of God left the splendors of heaven, came on earth, and lived upon it as man for thirty-three years. After dying a most cruel and ignominious death upon the cross, He rose from the dead and forty days later ascended into heaven. And yet we Catholics believe that He is still upon earth in His sacred humanity. Yes, we firmly believe that upon our altars, in the Holy Eucharist, Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is present really, truly, and substantially, under the appearance of bread,—present with soul and body, with flesh and blood, as God and man, precisely the same Christ born for us of Mary, the Virgin, the same Lord, who preached the life-giving doctrine to the multitudes on the lake of Galilee, the same Christ who died for our salvation on Calvary, and who will come on the last day in power and majesty to judge all mankind.

There are various and conflicting opinions among non-Catholics about the Eucharist, or, as they generally term it, the Lord's Supper. This mass of opinion may be divided into two distinct classes: the one saying, Christ is not present in

the Eucharist, the other maintaining His presence, but making it depend on the faith of the recipient. Contrary to both classes, the Church teaches that Christ becomes present by the power of His own words spoken by the priest at the consecration of the Mass, and that He is received by all in holy communion, independent of personal disposition, with this essential difference, however, that the just receive Him unto life eternal and the wicked (those in the state of mortal sin) unto their own condemnation.

There is no article of the Catholic faith which rests on stronger Bible evidence than the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Old Testament is full of its promises and intimations, but the New Testament is sufficient to banish every doubt concerning it. The four Evangelists speak of the Eucharist explicitly, and St. Paul bears witness to the strong belief of the early Christians in this great dogma. St. John (vi. 28--70) records the loving promise of Christ, made a year before His death, that He would give to all who believe in Him His own body as a heavenly food, a life-giving bread. The other three Evangelists, St. Matthew (xxvi.), St. Mark (xiv.), and St. Luke (xxii.), give us the fulfilment of that august promise. The words of institution are simple and transparent. The solemnity of the hour allows no figure of speech. If ever Our Lord had to be plain

in His words it was on this momentous occasion when He gave the greatest gift to mankind. We have no right to correct His words; we must accept them in their plain, literal sense; for they are used with a pointed reference; they are applied to the object visibly present. Our Lord made use of His sovereign power as God and changed bread and wine into His flesh and blood.

Do not say with the Jews of old: How can He do it? How is it possible? All things are possible to Him whom we believe to be the Son of God. It is the same Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, who holds the earth suspended in the midst of space, who transforms the tiny blade of grass into nutritious grain, who daily changes the bread we eat into our flesh and blood. By the same almighty power He causes the change in the Blessed Eucharist. It is a mystery; we cannot comprehend it. There is no religion without mystery. It is enough for us to know that Christ has taught it; He cannot deceive nor be deceived.

Such was also the unmistakable teaching of St. Paul (I. Cor. xi. 23--30) and of all the Apostles, Fathers, and Doctors of the Church. If you refuse to believe in the Real Presence, you cannot claim to believe all He has taught. Somebody has cheated you out of the most important part of Christianity. Strive to

regain it and with it the greatest mystery of love, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

XXIX.

The Bread of Life.

PERFECTION consists in union with God. The highest and closest union attainable on this side of the grave is the receiving of the body and blood of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in Him" (St. John vi. 57). When we receive holy communion, we receive something that looks and tastes like bread, that has the species or the appearance of bread; but the substance of the bread has been withdrawn and the body of Christ has been substituted. It is that same bread of which Our Lord speaks in His wonderful promise: "I am the Bread of life" (St. John vi. 48). We receive our divine Saviour into our very soul. God in His omnipotence could not give us more than He gives us in holy communion. With His divine Son He communicates to us grace and merit without measure or bounds. From Christ's adorable body in the Eucharist flows the sap of divine life into our souls, vivifying us and uniting us with the

Father. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (St. John vi. 58). Divine life is eternal life; consequently, holy communion is the pledge of immortality, as it is the communication of divine life. We shall live through Him and with Him, and live forever. Christ then is the bread of life, the food of the soul, the cause of its growth and development in knowledge and love. As God He is the life of the soul; as God-man He is the means and sustenance of life.

Through holy communion Christ, whose duty it is to show us the Father, feeds and fashions us to the full maturity of possessing God, preparing us step by step for our home in heaven. By the infusion of Eternal Life in holy communion we become so saturated with the life of Christ that we may exclaim with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). To see God and to be able to enjoy and possess Him, we must be like unto Him: holy communion, which nourishes the soul with the divine substance, makes us Godlike and fits us for our future destiny. Another effect of the Eucharistic banquet is to unite all men in one great brotherhood in Christ under God, our universal Father. "We being many, distinct and separate units, are one bread, for even as the grains of corn are ground up into flour and

welded together in the dough and hardened together in the oven; so in this mystery of love and charity, all that separates man from man is obliterated, all the dividing lines are erased under the amalgamating force of love which seeks to give all and to receive all; to absorb and to be absorbed, staying only at the limit of personal distinctness" (Tyrell). There is nothing fantastic, exaggerated, or sentimental about this doctrine. There is no room for figures nor for a shady, dreamy, and poetic remembrance of the divinity. Christ insists on the reality of His body in holy communion: "My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed."

We realize our many imperfections and sinfulness when we are about to receive holy communion. Which one of us is worthy to receive Christ into his heart? God alone is worthy to receive God; but He puts a sweet injunction on us: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (St. John vi. 54). And thus we come in humility and gratitude to receive the Bread of life. We do not forget the children that have not bread to eat. Some outside the Church imagine they possess this divine gift, but I solemnly assure them that what they receive is common bread, the same bread they buy at the bakeshop,—that no Anglican or Episcopal minister has any power to consecrate, and that they are deprived of the

true Bread of life. And we fervently pray that God may bring them to the knowledge of the Holy Eucharist.

XXX.

Why People go to Mass.

PROTESTANTS often wonder why Catholics are so anxious to assist at Mass. Very early in the morning, rain or snow, in hot or cold weather, they come in crowds to attend Mass, frequently at great inconvenience, and at the sacrifice of comfort and money. Non-Catholics are roused from sleep by the patter of feet on the sidewalk; people are returning from Mass. And this same anxiety is manifested by Catholics all the world over; it has been their way for over nineteen hundred years, and it will be their way until time shall be no more.

"You Catholics must think an awful lot of your service," a non-Catholic remarked to me the other day. I explained that our principal service is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, holier than which there is neither in heaven nor upon earth. Nothing can be substituted for this sacrifice; no devotion can supply it. In the Mass God receives a worship and honor worthy of Himself. Here His own Son prays and sacrifices; here the name of

God is truly glorified; here the words of the prophet find their fulfilment: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malach. i. 11).

After the blessed Saviour had changed bread and wine into His flesh and blood at the Last Supper He added the precious words: "Do this in commemoration of Me." With these words Christ gave to His Apostles and to their successors in the priesthood the power of renewing what He had just completed. Thus every Catholic priest, when celebrating Mass, takes bread and blesses it and says: "This is My body," and immediately the whole substance of the bread is changed into the body of Christ, so that after the consecration there is no longer bread on the altar, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of Mary Immaculate. You hear nothing but the sound of a tinkling bell, you see nothing but an uplifted Host and the gleam of a chalice:

> "The sound of a low, sweet whisper
> Floats over a little bread,
> And trembles around a chalice,
> And the priest bows down his head."

Yes, the priest sinks on his knee and the faithful strike their breasts and adore,

because their Lord and Saviour, the Lamb of God, is present, though hidden under the sacramental veil. On Calvary He redeemed the world by His death on the cross. In the Mass, the same divine blood is poured out again; the death of Christ is repeated in a mysterious and unbloody manner. The Mass is the memorial and renewal of the sacrifice on Calvary, the effects of which, in spite of the difference of time and place, reach us and all His followers.

For fifteen hundred years no Christian doubted the reality and necessity of the adorable sacrifice of the Mass. There were religious quarrels and controversies, but all, even heretics and schismatics, held to the doctrine of the Mass. Martin Luther believed in it and said Mass, even after being expelled from the Church of his fathers. Henry VIII. of England believed in it, and in his last will left money for Masses to be said for his soul. It took years and physical force to steal the Mass from the people of England and Protestant Germany. The Mass is the centre of Christian life and devotion. "Where there is no Mass, there is no Christianity" (Faber). Call your church a meeting-house, but do not call it the house of God. It may be a gorgeous pile, raised in Catholic times; the glory of the Lord has departed from it. On its altars there is no longer sacrifice. Death and silence dwell under its lofty vaults.

The Mass is the test of true worship. A Church without Mass is not the Church of God.

XXXI.

The Pope of Rome is the Head of the True Church of Christ.

THE Pope is the successor of St. Peter, the supreme head of Christ's Church, and the infallible teacher of religion.

Christ entrusted the government of His Church to St. Peter alone. The Apostles dispersed after Pentecost; they did not administer the Church in common. To St. Peter was given a supreme authority, not only over all the faithful, but over all the Apostles and disciples. This power or prerogative is called the primacy of St. Peter.

No government can exist without a head; no society can be called well-regulated without a presiding officer. Do not object: God is the head of the Church. Who doubts it? But God is the head of every government; He is the invisible ruler. The members of the Church, like those of every visible society, require a visible head. Now, we know for certain, that Christ appointed St. Peter as the supreme ruler of His Church.

Our Lord first promised St. Peter the headship of His Church when He said

to him: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matth. xvi. 18, 19). On Peter Christ built *His* Church; with the keys of His kingdom He gave him universal jurisdiction, full control in His house, the power to admit and to exclude. He who refuses to recognize Peter or his successor as head of the Church is evidently not in the true Church. Christ fulfilled His solemn promise to Peter when, after His resurrection He confided to him His entire sheepfold, the lambs and the sheep, pastors and people (St. John xxi. 15--17).

If, during the blessed life of his Master, Peter is signalized by special favors, if his name occurs always as the first Apostle, if he is a special witness of the miracles, of the glory and ignominy of Christ, if he is accorded a special appearance after the resurrection, yet it is not until after Pentecost that Peter appears before us, standing head and shoulders over his brethren, in the fulness of his God-given authority and power. He was the first of the Apostles neither in election nor in age; he is the first, because he is the rock on which Christ built His Church. He is the first to perform a public miracle; the

first to address the Jews in Jerusalem; the first to make converts. He directs the election of a new Apostle to succeed Judas; he presides at the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, where "there was much disputing." But Peter arose and spoke, and when he had finished, "all the multitude held their peace," and acquiesced in his decision as final, and without a possibility of appeal. This is the St. Peter of the New Testament, as every candid Bible Christian who reads the Scripture without prejudice will have to admit. But why is Pope Leo XIII. his successor? Because he takes his place, he occupies his chair. St. Peter was first Bishop of Antioch; from thence he removed his see to Rome where he died. How can we prove all this? From history, in the same way we would prove to a foreigner that Theodore Roosevelt is the successor of George Washington in the presidential chair of the United States of America.

The Pope or Bishop of Rome was looked upon at all times, since the days of the Apostles, as the supreme head of the universal Church. All cases of appeal have been decided by the Pope of Rome; at all times, bishops, priests, and people appealed to him as the head of the universal Church, He alone could convoke a General Council; the decrees of such a council had no universal force, unless confirmed and signed by him. He founded

new bishoprics, filled vacant sees, transferred bishops from one see to another, sent missionaries to heathen countries, and—nobody ever questioned his supreme authority in the Church.

The Pope is the infallible teacher of religion. This is a claim which at the first sound may appear bold and arrogant to one not familiar with the constitution of the Church. Catholics look upon this prerogative of Papal Infallibility as most reasonable and necessary. The infallibility of the Pope consists in his ability to decide questions concerning religion, that is, when the Pope, in his office as supreme teacher of the whole Church defines any doctrine of faith or morals as true, or condemns any doctrine of faith or morals as false, he is infallible. An example will explain it still better. A dispute arises about an important text of Scripture; the matter is referred to the Pope. Then the Sovereign Pontiff, before deciding the question, uses all available means and lights in the investigation of the truth; he seeks the advice of Cardinals, Bishops, and expert theologians; he reflects and prays over the matter, and at last, relying on a special assistance of God, in virtue of the promise of Christ, he pronounces his sentence, which is final and infallible. Is there anything unreasonable or absurd about this? Does not our Supreme Court in Washington settle litigations in a similar manner?

Infallibility does not mean inspiration. The Pope is infallible, but not inspired: he can make no new revelation nor a new divine law. By *inspiration* the Pope would be informed by the Holy Ghost what he should decide; his mind would be supernaturally put into the possession of truth. By *assistance* the Pope is left to find out the truth by the ordinary available means, but he is kept from falling into error by the Holy Ghost.

Infallibility does not mean *impeccability:* it does not mean that the Pope cannot do anything wrong, that he cannot commit sin. Neither the virtues nor the vices have anything to do with infallibility. The Pope, no matter how good he may be, looks upon himself as a sinner, goes to confession like every good Catholic, and realizes his unworthiness of being the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Personal sanctity or wickedness cannot affect his infallibility as supreme teacher of mankind.

The Pope is certainly not believed to be infallible in his ordinary conversation, nor even when writing on religious matters or publishing a book or treatise on theology; nor does his infallibility extend to questions of science, or ordinary questions of fact, or questions that are purely political or diplomatic. All these restrictions put the doctrine of papal infallibility within safe limits and on reasonable grounds. Finally, we have ecclesiastical

history to appeal to: it is a historical fact that no Pope ever erred, ever made a mistake, when giving a final decision in matters of faith and morals.

We honor and love the Pope as supreme head of God's Church and as our common father. He bears the highest dignity on earth and with it the greatest of burdens. We daily pray to God for him in the words of Scripture: "The Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies" (Ps. xl. 3).

XXXII.

Bad Popes.

When Christ instituted the Papacy, He did not promise that none but real saints would be clothed with the highest dignity on earth. He left it possible, even for the Head of His Church, to fall into sin, and to dishonor the sublime office. But as the personal wickedness of a judge cannot effect the dignity of the court, so an unworthy pope cannot derogate from the exalted position of the Papacy. "The dignity of Peter is never obscured, even in one unworthy of being his successor" (St. Leo). We have the infallible assurance of our divine Lord that His Church will remain secure against error

and decay by His personal abiding. If the reigning pope be a sinful man, the Papacy remains the same: a divine institution. Fortunately, nearly all the occupants of the See of Peter have been men of spotless character. Seventy-five, out of the two hundred and fifty-eight popes that have ruled the Church since the days of St. Peter, are canonized saints. They were universally considered to be men of heroic sanctity before they were proclaimed saints. How many were "bad" popes? One of the bitterest modern enemies of the popes, Davisson, found 21 bad popes, out of 259. Suppose him to be correct, what would it prove? Can the sun be darkened by the few black spots upon it? Shall the brilliancy of the Papacy be obscured by the faults of a few of its representatives? Eminent Protestant historians have, of late years, exonerated from vile charges those popes that were considered bad. The list of bad popes has now been reduced to three or four. Pope Alexander VI. is "the most remarkable instance of the influence of ignorance, prejudice, and calumny." Even Alexander has found grace with Roscoe and Hübner, who maintain that every possible crime has been attributed to him by prejudiced writers. Documents have been published recently to prove his wickedness. Are these documents genuine? But, admitting the worst and conceding that Alexander made a fla-

grant misuse of his power, he never lost sight of his essential duties as head of the Church and never compromised her faith or morals.

Where is the dynasty in history that claim so many excellent rulers as the See of Rome? Where is the line of rulers in which you find fewer unworthy of the office than in the Papacy? But how did it come to pass that such scandalous tales about the "bad" popes were circulated in the world? First of all, let me tell you that the wicked calumniate and the virtuous are calumniated. Not the bad, but the good, become victims of calumny. This goes to the credit of the Papacy, whose Founder said: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake" (St. Matth. v. 11).

All the lying legends of "bad" popes originated with bad and apostate Catholics, two very turbid and unreliable sources.

The chief originators of the "bad" popes in the Middle Ages were two court-bishops, Liutprand of Cremona and Ratherius of Verona, who were in the pay of the German Emperors and sided with them against the Roman Pontiffs.

Though at all times the representatives of the Church were attacked with lies and calumnies, yet it was reserved for the sixteenth century to witness a systematic vilification of the Papacy, inaugurated by

Martin Luther, a fallen priest. Some of his vituperations are simply untranslatable. "They are the filthiest things ever put into print" (Hefele). Luther seemed to be insane on this subject. He tells us that he could not pray without cursing the Pope. He twisted the whole Sacred Scripture into menaces and imprecations against the popes. He advocated the hanging and burning of the Pope, styled him the real Antichrist, an impious hypocrite. "Whosoever shall follow the Pope, him do I, Martin Luther, deliver to the divine judgment." And yet he wrote at the commencement of his nefarious career to Pope Leo X.: "Most Holy Father, I cast myself at thy feet with all that I have and am. Give life or take it; call, recall; approve, reprove; your voice is that of Christ, who presides and speaks in you." He seemed to abhor a course that would separate him from Rome; for, in February, 1519, he wrote: "No cause is so great or could become so great that one should separate himself from the Roman Church; nay, for no sin or evil whatsoever that one might name or think of, should one divide charity or spiritual unity." How are we to reconcile these words with his actions and later utterances? Not any better than we understand the inconsistencies of all his teachings and of his whole life. One characteristic feature seemed to deepen and steady in him: his hatred of the Pope.

Leaving Schmalkald, he said to the people: "May God fill you with hatred for the Pope." Towards the end of his life he could no longer mention the name of the Pope without adding that of the devil. The last book he wrote bore the title: "The Papacy an Institution of the Devil." On the day before his death, February 17, 1546, he seized a piece of chalk and wrote upon the wall: "Living, O Pope, I was thy pest; dying, I shall be thy death." They were the last words written by the hand of the man who was probably the most implacable and foulest enemy of the Papacy. Despite the stream of lies and calumnies that he started to course through centuries, and out of which so many have drunk to their own destruction, the Popes of Rome, in the past and present, are regarded as the custodians of divine truth, the protectors of true civilization, the promoters of art and science, the ornaments of the human race.

XXXIII.

Did the Catholic Church become Corrupted?

All will have to accept the indisputable fact that the Catholic Church is the first and the oldest Church, the one established

by Christ Himself. Our Protestant friends also admit that she was once the true Church, but that she became corrupted in the course of time, so that the Reformers deemed it necessary to break away from her and establish a new Church.

If the Catholic Church was once the true Church and ceased to be such and fell into error, then the work of Christ ceased to exist, and Christianity is only a matter of the past. Christ, however, promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against His Church, because He built her upon a rock. If the Church fell into error and corruption in the course of time, then the gates of hell prevailed against her. Christ has broken His promise and deceived us, and all Christianity is an imposition.

Moreover, in sending His Apostles into the whole world to teach and baptize, to guide and to command, He said: "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the end of the world." Here He solemnly pledges His word that He would abide with His Church always. How could the Church become corrupted with the abiding presence of Christ? Besides, He promised, before leaving the world, to send to His Church the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to remain with her forever, to teach her all truth and to keep her from ever lapsing into a single error. And you say, the Church went astray into falsehood and corruption?

Again, He made His Church the organ through which He was to speak to men, and He commanded all men at all times to hear and believe the teachings of His Church and to regard her representatives as His mouthpiece: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." It is impossible to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and to maintain, at the same time, that His promises have failed, and His Church, "the ground and pillar of truth," has fallen into the hands of the evil one. No, the Church is as young and vigorous as at the hour when she issued from the open side of her crucified Lord, as fair and spotless as on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit of Truth was wedded to her forever. Men have gone astray and turned into error and corruption, but the Catholic Church remains unchangeable in her divine Founder.

And yet there are so many defects in the Catholic Church, so many glaring inconsistencies and contradictions, so many unreasonable devotions and proscriptions, so many degrading superstitions and practices, that a non-Catholic finds it difficult to recognize her as the work of God, the only means of salvation for all. I answer that most of the objections are the effect of distorted representation or long-standing prejudice. How can they be overcome? In three different ways. Blots are removed from an object by being wiped

away from the medium through which it was viewed and which transferred its own defects to the object. If my spectacles are dusty, things will look dusty, until I wipe my glasses. Free your mind from prejudice, from preconceived ideas, and the blots in the Church will vanish. A picture may be dark and cheerless, even unpleasant and repelling, because sufficient light is not cast upon it. Open the blinds, let the rays of the sun stream into the room, turn the picture to the sun. Oh, how charming the vision! Get the proper light upon the Church; seek plenty of information; she can bear all the light you may focus on her. Study and reflect. Read the true history of the Church, and do not gather knowledge from those who hate and ignore her. The more you know of the Church, the greater will be your admiration for her.

Defects sometimes arise from the manner of looking at the object, from the position of the spectator. Look at the Providence Cathedral windows from the outside. How obscure the figures appear, how ill-shaped their bodies, how distorted their faces! You detect veritable caricatures. Now leave the street, enter into the church, and look again. Oh, what a rapturous sight! How delightful the change! The same windows now glow in the rich and varied light of heaven and reveal to you sweet faces of saints and angels, pure and delicate forms, grace-

ful folds of garments and exquisite tracery. Had you seen the Cathedral only from the outside, you would have been disappointed and remained prejudiced against the building.

So it is with the Catholic Church. Looking at her from a human point of view, you see nothing but what is human, weakness and decay. Enter into her spirit and constitution, and ask God to give you the proper light, and then look at her dazzling beauty, and you will see her, the holy city, Jerusalem, the vision of peace, the bride of God, come down from heaven, adorned in her supernatural splendors for her heavenly Bridegroom. And looking around, you will notice thousands, nay millions of men and women, leading quiet and virtuous lives, praying, working, and dying, and leaving no other record of their noble deeds than a tombstone with a cross on it. Then you will realize that evil is more conspicuous than good in this world; that one criminal attracts more attention than scores of good men; that the sanctity of the living Church cannot be darkened by her few unworthy children; that the corruptions of Rome are generally the fabrications of apostate priests; that the Catholic Church remains without spot or wrinkle.

XXXIV.

Progress in the Catholic Church.

THE Catholic Church never changes. As her divine Founder is unchangeable, so His Church remains ever the same. "Is there then to be no progress in the Catholic Church?" a learned monk of the fifth century asks. He gives himself the correct answer: "God forbid! Only it must be progress, not alteration in the faith. The idea of progress is growth in identity; alteration means a change from one thing to another. May the whole Church, and each one of the faithful, grow in wisdom and knowledge; not altering, but advancing in the same doctrine, mind, and faith. The doctrines of the divine philosophy of Christianity may be developed, defined, and perfected, but they cannot be altered, diminished, or mutilated without sin. They may, indeed, gain additional proof, light, and definiteness, but to do so they must retain their fulness, integrity, and essence" (Vincent of Lerins). With this answer in mind, we shall be able to distinguish between true and false progress, between reality and sham. Growth in wisdom and knowledge, while preserving the identity of truth; advancement in doctrine, mind, and faith;

development of Christian philosophy by looking for additional proofs, light, and definiteness—here is what we understand by progress. Away with your hazy definitions and foggy notions, ye philosophers of the "unknowable," ye advocates of "modern" progress! Away with your lying ideals of intellectual advancement, your will-o'-the-wisps of moral and temporal progress! You maliciously accuse the Catholic Church of being the enemy of all progress, while you attempt to reduce mankind to the abominable condition of paganism. Where do you find real progress outside the Catholic Church? Accumulation of wealth or centralization of power under a tyrant is not progress.

The Church encourages not only spiritual progress, but temporal prosperity likewise. The highest spiritual aims do not interfere with industrial and material prosperity. Look at the history of the Church. "There grew up under the shadow of her mighty Cathedrals those centres of commerce, each one a very forest of towers and spires, palaces, with whose magnificence the residences of no modern millionaires can compare" (Hettinger). All the marvels of mediæval art, of which only a few memorials remain, were wrought not by the toil of the overcrowded, destitute poor, as is now so often the case, but the humblest as well as the highest shared in the splendor of commercial prosperity. The grand

market-places and spacious halls of commerce in Belgium tell us of the material progress that has lasted for centuries and is evident at the present time among a thoroughly Catholic nation. The gorgeous halls of that solid building now used as the University of Louvain was once the place of assembly for the guild of the woolmerchants when religion flourished most in Belgium. Progress, moral and material, follows the steps of the Church. Wherever and whenever the Catholic Church freely exercises her glorious mission, unfettered by temporal governments and secret societies, there true progress flourishes, and peace and prosperity abound.

XXXV.

Why He Lost His Faith.

He was baptized and became a member of the Catholic Church. He was instructed in the faith of Christ. His parents gave him a sound Catholic education; he was frequently nurtured by the holy sacraments. He looked upon Mary as his loving mother and he felt happy in the company of angels and saints. But —oh the dreadful change!—he now spurns the doctrine of the Church, he laughs at believers, he ridicules religious

practices, he considers all priests consummate hypocrites, he scorns the ignorance and credulity of simple people. What has brought about this radical revolution? He says he has examined things for himself, he has investigated matters thoroughly, he has read, studied, and weighed arguments, and he has come to the conclusion that religion is an imposition. He lies. He has examined nothing for himself; he has neither time nor talents for deep study. He has never been able and will never be able to read the product of our master-minds, the great works of our Christian philosophers and Catholic theologians. If he had studied and reflected, he would not give knowledge as a cause of unbelief; for knowledge leads to religion. He may deceive children with his clatter of speech and his air of wisdom; he cannot thus cheat a sensible man. Come, and I will show you why you lost your faith. Your pretended infidelity is nothing but the corruption of your wicked heart. You have fallen intellectually, because you have sinned against the light, and now spiritual darkness lies heavy upon you. You boast of it,—boast of your shame and degradation! I never met a turn-coat of this type who was sober, just, and chaste. I never heard of good men falling away from the Church, but I have often heard of good men coming into the Church.

Bergier, who lived in the midst of the

famous French infidels and read all their works, affirms that their infidelity had no other source than licentiousness and the unbridled sway of their passions. The royal protégé of Frederic II., the arch-infidel Voltaire, was no exception. The king wrote of him to Dargot: "Voltaire behaved here like a consummate scoundrel and cheat. He is a wretch . . . the most wicked fool I have ever known. You cannot imagine what duplicity, cheating, and villainy he practised here."

Passions cause men to lose the light of faith. "Every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved" (St. John iii. 20). The great St. Augustine traces all intellectual errors to moral errors: "All error is, in a certain sense, founded on sin." And the distinguished theologian Suarez writes: "Sin alone deceives the soul when, after deserting and despising the truth, it seeks to find what is true."

He who had the true faith and lost it, has lost all, and deserves our pity.

XXXVI.

The Catholic Church is Intolerant.

We admit the truth of this charge: the Catholic Church is naturally intolerant in

matters of religion. She is conscious of being the only true Church of Christ, and of holding the eternal destinies of the human race; she considers herself to be alone in the possession of the truth, and all other creeds to be more or less in error. It is her duty to resist and refute all such creeds, and thereby to cause the true doctrine to prevail. Truth is intolerant; wherefore the Church, being the divine depository of truth, is and must be intolerant. She abhors error and all offences against the truth, especially apostasy and heresy.

The Catholic Church is the spouse of Christ and admits of no rival. There can be no question of religious or dogmatic toleration for the Catholic Church; the very word is an insult to her who represents God on earth. Religious toleration for the Church would be indifferentism to eternal truth, and, as such, something detestable. This may appear cruel and selfish, but if we profess, as we do, that there is but one true Church, out of which there is no salvation, and that the Catholic Church is the true one, then we must defend the principle of dogmatic intolerance and firmly resist any attempt to withdraw a man from the pale of the true Church.

We are not permitted to confirm a man in his error; we are obliged to point out to him his error that would cause him serious loss. No error is so injurious as

an error about religion; for it affects the welfare of immortal souls.

The Catholic Church will never come to terms with other religious opinions and parties, as she cannot surrender the truth.

God Himself in the Old Testament enjoined religious intolerance. The Israelites could not tolerate religious dissent, and as their religion was intimately connected with all their civil institutions, death was the penalty for those who revolted against the Jewish religion.

But this religious intolerance of the Church does not condemn and persecute persons in error, only false principles. People may be in error of faith and yet be saved. We have no right to impute guilt to those who are in error; we should show to all the duties of brotherly love expressly enjoined by the Church, and let them live in peace.

But has not the Catholic Church in the past persecuted and punished heretics and those who differed from her doctrine? Yes, when heresy was a political crime and operated against the civil law, and when religion was so bound into the framework of society that to disturb religion was to shake the foundation of government. Even the Justinian Code says: "What is done against the divine religion is an injury to all." Heresy was considered a graver crime than high treason: "Far more grievous is it to offend the heavenly than the earthly king." It may

be difficult for us to realize this state of public sentiment when in our days we hear blasphemies against the majesty of God vomited forth in public, and His holy name profaned on all sides, and the government officials take no notice of such crimes which were formerly capital offences. When Europe was Catholic, and the temporal order was united with the religious, sins against religion were sins against the social order, and heretics were rebels against society and had to be punished on the principle that no man was allowed to teach and spread falsehood. But in our days, when society is no longer professedly Catholic, religious toleration has become almost universal, not because people have become more charitable or more enlightened, but through sheer social necessity. In her doctrine, however, and form of worship the Catholic Church will remain intolerant to the end of days.

XXXVII.

Protestantism, the Enemy of Religious Liberty.

It seems vicious to call Protestantism the enemy of religious liberty, when Protestants make it their special boast and take to themselves the credit of having blessed society with it; still the facts of

history are inexorable. By religious liberty we understand absolute freedom of religion, in its doctrine, discipline, and worship, from all human authority.

We boldly subscribe to the statement of our great American philosopher Brownson: "Protestantism is really in its very nature and essence an earnest and solemn protest against religious liberty."

At the Diet of Spires, held in April, 1529, it was decreed that all religious strife should cease until the next ecumenical council; that those princes who had introduced the "new (Lutheran) religion" into their domains might retain and practise it without hindrance; but that they should tolerate the free exercise of the old religion. Against this last clause the Lutheran princes, instructed by their preachers, protested, declaring it to be against "God and His holy word." From this public Protestation against the free exercise of the religion of their Catholic fellow-citizens, the Reformers and their children received the significant name *Protestants*. Please keep it in your memory, it is a matter of history; they were called Protestants because they protested against religious liberty.

The Protestant Reformation has been justly called by a Protestant writer the uprising of the human mind against the principle of absolute authority in matters of faith. It was the rebellion of the human mind against the authority of God,

the substitution of man for God. The principle of absolute authority in matters of religion being abolished, nothing is left but human authority, which is destructive of religious liberty. I am not surprised to read in the writings of Martin Luther this tyrannical declaration: "Whosoever teaches differently from what I have taught, or whosoever condemns it, condemns God, and he must remain a child of hell" (Saemtl. Werke, 28, 346). He called Calvin for differing with him on a theological point, "an in and in, out and out, through and through, devil-possessed, blasphemous heart, impudent liar."

The Reformers tolerated no opposition to their religious opinions. Their principles of intolerance were faithfully practised by their followers. Protestants have never tolerated Catholics as such except through necessity. Glance at the history of our own country. Maryland, the "cradle of religious liberty," was settled by persecuted English Catholics. They were the first colony in the United States to grant full toleration in religious matters. Persecuted Protestants sought protection under the tolerant sceptre of the Roman Catholic. Scarcely had Protestants obtained control of the Legislature when with base ingratitude they deprived their Catholic brethren of the protection of the law. "Thus Roman Catholics were disfranchised in the province which they had planted" (Bancroft).

In Massachusetts, the cold and relentless Puritans made death the penalty for a Jesuit who should enter the colony.

The Blue Laws of Connecticut had a statute that "no priest shall abide in its dominion; he shall be banished and suffer death on his return."

Such manœuvres are impossible in the present days, not because Americans are better educated, but because Catholicism is too strong in the land and Protestantism is effete. The fearful intolerance shown to Catholics under the first Protestant Emperor in Germany, William I., is too recent and too fresh in our minds to make us forget that Protestantism really is the enemy of religious liberty.

XXXVIII.

Religious Persecutions.

To be a Catholic is to be persecuted. Persecutions have been the lot of Catholics always and in every land. The divine Founder told in advance: "They shall persecute you" (St. Luke xxi. 12). What is surprising, however, is the deplorable fact that Catholics are accused of having caused many sanguinary persecutions against those who dissented from their doctrine. The Catholic Church, it is true, is implacable against error, but against the

erroneous she uses, not the sword, but the weapon of St. Paul: "Preach the word; . . . reprove, entreat; rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (II. Tim. iv. 2). Never did Pope or Council sanction the policy of vengeance or issue a decree of death or torture against those who for conscience sake differed from her belief. The famous Spanish Inquisition was a State institution; the Church should never be held responsible for the excesses of her children which she loudly condemned. If there were cruelties as certified by history, not by the lying apostate Llorente, we denounce them with all our heart.

What about the *Roman* Inquisition? Were not the scaffolds prepared in Rome to punish crimes against religion? Rome, which has been represented by her enemies as a monster of intolerance and cruelty, has never pronounced the execution of capital punishment. The Popes, armed with the tribunal of intolerance, have never spilt a drop of blood. Protestants have shed torrents of it; the tendency of Rome has been toward mercy.

Luther, the father of Protestantism, boasted of the slaughter of one hundred and fifty thousand peasants; he preached the extermination of the Jews.

Zwingli's motto was: "The Gospel thirsts for blood." Calvin, the most brutal and bloodthirsty of all the Reformers, called for an establishment to extirpate the race of heretics. During his stay at

Geneva the hangman's was an onerous office.

The father of Protestantism in England, Henry VIII., put to death not less than 30,000 Englishmen for their faith; and Cranmer justified his butcheries by texts from Holy Scripture.

The hearts of civilized men are filled with horror as they read the history of Protestant tyranny in Catholic Ireland, a history of persecution unparalleled in the Christian era.

What shall we say of the bloody reign of Queen Elizabeth? A Protestant historian exclaims: "Talk about Catholic persecution and cruelty! Where are you to find persecution and cruelty like this? Elizabeth put, in one way or another, more Catholics to death, in one year, for not becoming apostates to the religion which she had sworn to be hers, and to be the only true one, than Mary put to death in her whole reign for having apostatized from the religion of her and their fathers. Yet the former is called good Queen Bess, and the latter bloody Queen Mary. Even the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew was nothing, when fairly compared with the butcheries and other cruelties of the reign of this Protestant Queen of England; yes, a mere nothing; and yet she put on mourning on that occasion, and had the consummate hypocrisy to affect horror at the cruelties that the king of France had committed" (Cobbett).

Bear these facts in mind: The Catholic Church never approved of it, when Catholic rulers persecuted heretics (for political and state purposes) or when people were compelled to attend Catholic worship against their will; she never compelled any one to receive her faith; she never denounced Protestants for being Protestants, but for falling away from the true Church and for seducing others. Protestants, however, have persecuted Catholics for being Catholics, and for remaining faithful to the religion of their fathers.

XXXIX.

The Protestant Reformers the Enemies of Reason, Liberty, and Education.

In branding the Reformers of the sixteenth century with this strong epithet we do not wish to cast the slightest reproach or blame on their descendants, not any more than we could blame the children whose fathers had squandered their inheritance and reduced them to poverty. We merely point to a historical fact.

The Reformation was the uprising of the lower animal against the higher being in man; the revolt of all that is mean and

degrading in human nature against the moral dignity of man.

Martin Luther taught a most degrading doctrine. He maintained that by original sin man had lost all his strength to resist evil, and all his power to know the truth and to do good: that his moral and religious faculties were not only weakened, but completely destroyed; that he became essentially wicked. Reason, he taught, in its relation to God and the moral order, did not exist. "Reason is the bride of the devil, an abomination which with its wisdom we ought to tread under foot." He wrote a book on "Slave Will," in which he taught a fatalistic doctrine, showing that man is not free, that good works are useless to salvation. The work of education was carried on by the Church with great zeal and success before the Protestant Reformation. She covered Europe with universities, and her educational training and literary culture, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, rose to a height never since surpassed. The mental training at those universities was superior to that which is dispensed at our modern seats of learning, and the number of students was never since equalled.

Luther was the avowed enemy of educations. He raged against philosophy and the exercise of human reason; he ridiculed the German universities; he called the Aristotelian philosophy the work of

Satan. The consequence of such teachings was a neglect of the schools and a contempt for learning. "Tell me," Luther asks in dismay, "what city is (now) so strong or so pious as to collect enough to support a schoolmaster?" The Reformer Farel regarded every kind of human knowledge as the conception of hell and the devil.

At Wittenberg, the preachers George Mohr and Gabriel Didymus, both zealous Lutherans, proclaimed from the pulpit that the study of sciences was not only useless, but pernicious, and that the people could not do better than destroy academies and schools. The result of this preaching was to convert the schoolhouse of Wittenberg into a baker's shop. The same thing, as Döllinger states, occurred through the duchy of Anspach.

Had the teachings of the Reformers been fully accepted and put into practice, Europe would have sunk into an abyss of barbarism and utter degradation. Happily, as Balmez remarks, "public opinion, good sense, and decency ranged themselves on the side of Catholicity. Even those nations which embraced these fatal doctrines as a religious theory ordinarily rejected them in practice" (European Civilization).

The Church had left too deep an impression on society to deliver it to the fatal consequences of such teaching. In condemning the errors of the so-called Ref-

ormation, the Church saved Europe from a moral and intellectual shipwreck, and preserved the dignity of manhood.

Yes, had Protestant nations followed the "new" doctrine, they would have fallen below the level of paganism; for pagans did not proscribe learning, but honored and fostered art and science. Nevertheless, the Reformation stopped or, at least, hindered the great work of civilization which the Church was prosecuting.

Were it not for the Catholic Church, Europe would have fallen into a hopeless condition of ignorance and social misery.

XL.

The Popularity of Luther as Father of Protestantism.

THERE was a time when Martin Luther was one of the most popular men in all Germany. There had been growing among the people a desire for a reform of certain abuses which had crept into the Church's discipline, as it may happen at any time. These abuses were not doctrinal nor could they affect in the least the divine constitution or nature of the Church; and while the Wittenberg monk pretended to confine himself to the correction of these abuses and scandals, he was

hailed as a reformer. But the people never dreamed of a separation from the Church nor of the creation of sects; and when Luther began to preach an open rebellion against lawful authority and, after the failure of the rebellion which he had caused, advised the slaughter of the rebels, he naturally became an object of execration to both nobles and peasants. A few princes only, whose guilty consciences were better soothed by the lax morals of the Wittenberg gospel than by the strict law of the ancient Church, and who were greedy for the treasures of monasteries and convents, remained staunch patrons of the apostate monk and his doctrine. The poor, who had to choose between accepting the Lutheran creed enforced by their sovereigns and quitting their country with wife and children, were naturally opposed to the new doctrine and longed for "the horrors of the Papacy."

Soon after his separation from the Catholic Church, Luther found himself abandoned and persecuted by all. "They accuse me," he writes, "of being a rebel, of sundering the unity of the Church; and whatever of evil is done, they say, is done on my account." When his father fell dangerously ill at Mansfeld, he would not venture to visit him; he feared that the people (not the Catholics) might slay him on the way. There was a universal complaint that things were worse since the Reformation than in former times, "when

all went on smoothly, and when there was no persecution, and people lived together as good friends and neighbors." Luther was blamed for the change. "People," he said, "would like to drive me out of the country and starve me." He had to invoke the civil power for protection and to entrust his church government to princes and nobles. Even those who followed Luther's doctrine remained so much attached to the old Church that he declared: "If I wished, I could easily with two or three sermons make my people turn back to the Papacy."

Luther's last hours were embittered with the horrors of the growing immorality and the evil spirit of insubordination to authority which were the result of his nefarious doctrine of private judgment in religion and justification by faith alone. "We live in Sodom and Babylon," he wrote, "everything is daily growing worse." In the district of Wittenberg, where Luther had labored so long and ardently, there was, according to his own statement, "but one peasant who urged his domestics to the Word of God and the Catechism; all others were going to the devil." Preachers were driven away, he says, by starvation. He was so disgusted with the wantonness and libertinism of his parishioners that he left, for a time, Wittenberg and instructed his "wife" to sell out and follow him. For this poor woman and her children, when Luther was

called to God, nobody seemed to care. They lived and died in wretched poverty, after seeking vainly for support from the Protestant princes and the reformer's admirers.

We must give, however, full credit to his native genius, his vigorous intellect, and tenacious memory. "He was an eloquent speaker and writer; but his eloquence was more of the whirlwind blinding the eyes with a cloud of dust. His language was such that, throughout the whole of his works, not a single sentence can be found wholly free from a certain coarseness and vulgarity. Courageous to temerity in prosperity, he was cowardly to abjectness in adverse fortune. . . . The harm he did to the Church was great indeed; but while bringing incomparable disaster upon others, he brought no advantage to himself. His name will be memorable in history for all time, but is a name of infamy and dishonor" (Pallavicini). Thus people in the sixteenth century thought and spoke of the "popular" founder of Protestantism. We do not glory in the downfall of Luther, for we still remember that he was once a faithful and obedient child of the Catholic Church and had received from her the indelible character of the priesthood. Whilst we hold him responsible for causing spiritual loss to so many souls, we mourn his fall and deplore his impenitent ending.

XLI.

Protestantism makes Perverts, but no Converts.

PROTESTANTISM lacks the essential attribute of universality. It is therefore a dead failure as a religion. The true Church of God must be designed for all people at all times. No Protestant denomination existed before the sixteenth century. And it is a remarkable fact, which Macaulay points out, that no Christian nation which did not adopt the principles of the Reformation before the end of the sixteenth century, ever adopted them afterwards. Catholic communities have, since that time, become infidel and become Catholic again; but none have become Protestant.

The principle of Protestantism is the denial of Catholic truth; it is the principle of negation, which does not build up, but pulls down and destroys. It contains no germ of life, but carries the seed of consumption and death. It has no inherent power of propagation; it naturally disintegrates and dissolves itself into infidelity of fanaticism. Its spread in the sixteenth century was no religious

movement. "Sovereigns impatient to appropriate to themselves the prerogatives of the Pope, nobles desirous to share the plunder of abbeys, weak men allured by the glitter of novelty,"—these, according to Macaulay, were its disciples and chief advocates. The different Protestant sects were formed to suit the taste of some particular nation or government. They became national churches. "The Reformed churches became mere national churches. The Church of England existed for England alone. It was an institution purely local. The Church of Scotland existed for Scotland alone. The operations of the Catholic Church took in the whole world" (Macaulay).

Protestantism has made no real converts; it occasionally succeeds in entrapping an ignorant or disreputable Catholic or in beguiling a sentimental woman with the horrors of Romanism, but it has never converted to its principles and practice a single strong-minded and pure-hearted man. And it has done nothing in missionary work.

While the Catholic Church has girdled the world with her missions, the Protestant Church has accomplished nothing. In the last century Protestants have made a tremendous effort to evangelize heathen nations. Enormous sums were collected for the purpose. Missionaries went to pagan countries to distribute millions of Bibles and tracts along the coasts, but no

real conversions were effected according to the testimonies of Protestant missionaries. Their own confessions of hopeless failure are to be found in Marshall's classical work: "Christian Missions."

Whatever nations were converted from paganism to Christianity since the days of the Apostles, were converted by the Catholic Church. All missionary efforts on the part of Protestants were fruitless; the few converts they thought they made were worse after their pretended conversion. The utter discouragement of Protestant missionaries, their disappointment and disgust at the complete failure, are expressed in their letters and reports as collected by Marshall in his admirable book.

The Bibles, given out by ministers, are used as parcel-paper for groceries and wadding for guns. Few pagans can read, and if they could read, how can they understand the Bible? And does not St. Paul tell us that faith comes by hearing? "How shall they hear without the preacher?"

The Catholic Church alone has the power of universal expansion. Her missionary leaves the comforts of home, and at the risk of health and life throws himself among savage tribes. He is all alone; he is not hampered by the ties of matrimony. He lives with the heathen; he observes their customs and shares their joys and sorrows. He teaches them the habits of industry and cleanliness. He preaches

to them the Gospel of the merciful Saviour, who bled and died that they should be happy. His highest ambition —he hardly dares expect it—is to die a martyr for the faith he announces. Are not the recent events in China fresh in our minds, the persecution of Christians? Daily did we read dispatches from China that such or such a missionary was safe, had escaped, etc. Was he a Catholic missionary? Shame on you to ask the question! How could the priest of Christ think of his own safety when the sheep of the Lord are surrounded by wolves? Then he was needed, then he suffered and died with the converts he had made. Yes, he went to his death with the conviction that his place would be taken by another priest, and that the missionary work of the Church would be carried on unto the end of time.

XLII.

Tactics of Protestantism.

When men leave an old and honorable institution or society to which they belonged for many years, they are supposed to have a solid reason for separating themselves from that association and setting up a new establishment of their own.

Were they obliged to take their departure? Did they find it more profitable or even necessary to break away? Protestants left the Catholic Church, the Church of their fathers. What reason do they give us for protesting against the Church which had rescued their ancestors from spiritual and temporal misery and brought peace for time and eternity to so many generations? The patrons of the so-called Reformation cannot bring forward a solid reason; they take their refuge in fable and calumny, two deadly weapons, which they furbish with startling and inflammatory rhetoric, constantly misstating and defaming. The Catholic Church, they say, had become a sink of corruption; the popes were monsters of iniquity; ignorance and immorality prevailed among the clergy universally; superstition and idolatry had supplanted true Christianity.

We absolutely deny these charges. Now, if a gentleman denies a slander, he who offered it is supposed to withdraw the charge and apologize, or prove it true. Neither is done; the lie goes on, on the principle, "Fling dirt enough; some will stick." Thus the stream of lies will flow on; it will be fed by new rivulets of falsehood and malice. Protestantism, in order to live and spread, had to put aside the eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." It still bears false witness on principle; it has to do so in order to exist at all;

it will die of exhaustion if it surrenders its tradition of slander and fable. It falsified systematically the whole history of the Church in order to prove the necessity of a separation from Rome.

We are obliged to think and speak well of our neighbor as long as we possibly can. Nobody is supposed to be wicked until proven guilty. We should feel glad when foul accusations are withdrawn and scandals removed. We should help to remove sinful imputations. But strange to say Protestant ministers continue to rail against their Catholic ancestors with a virulence that is scarcely Christian. They naturally find it more pleasant to attack others than to defend themselves. As long, however, as they fail to give another reason for separating themselves from the one, true, Catholic Church than the traditional calumny and fable, we brand their tactics as infamous and highly reprehensible. The end of Protestantism is not distant; it is in its last agony and will soon be a corpse, especially here in America, where it is without the protection of the State. "Falsehood succeeds for a generation, or for a period; but there it has its full course and comes to an end. Truth is eternal; it is great and will prevail. The end is the proof of things" (Newman).

XLIII.

Indulgences.

One of the principal reasons given for the so-called Reformation was the shameful traffic in indulgences. An indulgence was a license obtained to commit sin, they say. This barefaced falsehood is still dished up in our days, though it has been refuted millions of times.

What is an indulgence in the Catholic Church? An indulgence is the remission of temporal punishment due to sin after the sin itself has been forgiven. An indulgence is granted outside the Sacrament of Penance, and the punishment is remitted by the application of the merits of Christ and His saints, which merits are entrusted to the keeping of the Catholic Church. Indulgences encourage sinners to be reconciled to God, and thus promote the receiving of the sacraments and the practice of good works. Money for almsgiving may be prescribed as one of the conditions for gaining a certain indulgence; but almsgiving does not remit sin of itself, nor are the poor ever deprived of gaining the indulgence for want of money. The Scripture tells us of the good effect of almsgiving. Does the Church do wrong by encouraging donations of

money to be applied to charitable uses or for religious purposes?

Pope Leo X. had granted to the Catholic world a plenary indulgence. One of the conditions of gaining it was an offering for the building of St. Peter's Basilica at Rome. A learned and saintly Dominican, John Tetzel, was commissioned to publish this indulgence in the North of Germany. Tetzel's conduct was above reproach; the appearance of some of his assistants, together with the manner in which they offered and praised the indulgence, gave an opportunity to Luther to set up a cry, not against the abuses, but against the Catholic doctrine, although in the seventy-first of his famous public theses he declares: "Whosoever speaks against the truth of papal indulgences, let him be anathema." The open contradictions in those theses show Luther's complete ignorance of the nature and effect of indulgences, an ignorance he willingly confessed a few years later: "Upon my salvation, I knew no more at that time what an indulgence was, than did those who came to inquire of me." His opponent, John Tetzel, who answered Luther's challenge, clearly and concisely defended the Church's doctrine on this point. He said correctly: "Indulgences do not forgive sin, but only the temporal punishment due to sin, and this only when the sin has been sincerely repented of and confessed; indulgences do not detract

from the merits of Christ, but in place of satisfactory punishment they put the satisfactory Passion of Christ."

The better we understand the teaching of the Church, the more anxious we will be to gain indulgences and thus to shorten our sufferings in this life and in the next.

XLIV.

Scandals in the Catholic Church.

HERE is a rather common objection, not without foundation either, raised by our separated brethren: "If you people are members of the only true Church, how is it that we meet so many Catholics who are anything but good Christians? Did not Christ say: 'By their fruits you shall know them'? Where are the 'good fruits' in the lives of Catholics?"

It is a subject of shame and confusion to us Catholics, that so many who call themselves members of the Church are a scandal and stumbling-block. And we would be inclined to discouragement, did not the blessed Saviour warn us in advance when He said: "It is impossible that scandals should not come," considering the frailty of human nature, but He pronounced "woe to him through whom they come."

Christ likened His Church to a net

which gathered both good and bad fishes. We must be satisfied with the Church as the Son of God made her; we cannot make her any better than He did. An enemy, He tells us, has sown weeds in His Church; these weeds shall remain among the wheat until harvest. Then "the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals;" then there shall be the Church of the saints, without scandals.

Scandals and abuses have always existed among the members of the Church: they existed in the time of the Apostles, as we learn from their epistles; they existed after the Apostles were called home, and they always will exist. Moral evil will always be found among Catholics, not only in the laity, but among the clergy also. There have been bad nuns and monks, wicked priests and bishops, and even three or four unworthy popes, who by their worldliness, ambition, sloth, and licentiousness have insulted and disgraced their Holy Mother, the Catholic Church. St. Paul truly remarks: "In a large house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some, indeed, unto honor, and some unto dishonor." The scandals which do occur within the pale of the Church happen, not as a consequence of her principles and Commandments, but precisely when her teaching and injunctions are despised or disregarded. The Church has the promise

of the abiding, unchanging, and infallible truth, together with the possession of the channels of grace; she has no promise whatever that all her children will be saved.

Comparisons sometimes are odious. If Catholics are not any better than non-Catholics, they are certainly not any worse. They should be better, however, than they are, considering the graces and lights at their disposal. But when the charge is made that Catholic countries are morally worse than Protestant countries, then we emphatically deny and go one step further and maintain the opposite. For reliable facts and statistics we refer to the book of the Paulist, Father Young, "Catholic and Protestant Countries Compared." We also, whenever the invidious comparison is forced upon us, repeat the words of a brother priest: "It is acknowledged by almost all who have any real knowledge of the subject that in point of purity of morals, Catholic Spain and the really Catholic part of the people of France and Italy are immeasurably above the people of the Protestant portion of Germany, of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and that judged by every test applicable to morality—female chastity, integrity, and sobriety—Catholic Ireland is far in advance of Protestant Scotland. The inhabitants of Catholic Tyrol, beyond all denial, stand above the people of Protestant Switzerland with regard to moral-

ity. Coming nearer home—for every act of brigandage, murder, or robbery in Italy and Spain, there might be truthfully recounted ten in the United States" (*American Cath. Quarterly Review,* Jan. 1884).

XLV.

"I would like to Believe, but I Cannot."

FAITH is a supernatural virtue whereby we believe without doubting whatever God has revealed to man, because *He* has revealed it. Faith is determined by the authority of the informant; in knowledge the assent is determined by evidence. Endeavor to fix these terms upon your mind so as to understand the real nature of faith. The grace of God is absolutely necessary for faith; for it is a supernatural virtue. No one can believe unless God helps him; but God does not force any man to believe. The moral value of faith arises from the freedom of assent. God could not reward you for your faith if you were not perfectly free to believe or not to believe.

We must will to believe. "To believe depends on the will of those who believe; but the will of man must be prepared by God through grace, and thus be raised to the supernatural order." These words of St. Thomas of Aquin, the greatest theo-

logian in the Church, hit the nail on the head. God could not condemn me for unbelief, unless it depended on my will. Man has that wonderful power which makes him master of his own will; he can will to will.

You notice the sunny disposition of the believer: you see how happy and independent he feels and acts, how neither sorrow nor death can deprive him of an interior peace which surpasses all understanding. You say, you would also like to believe, but you cannot. You are not honest with yourself. If you wish for an object, you are anxious to secure it by using the means and ways that will procure it for you. You wish to believe, to have faith; why do you not make an effort to become a believer? Faith is the precious gift of God; He holds it up to you and is willing to give it to you, provided you humble yourself and ask for it. Cast off the mask of hypocrisy. Why put on the air of learning and research? If you really knew something, you would realize your appalling ignorance in religious matters. You may be a man with men, but be a child before God. Humbly kneel down in His presence, and fervently ask Him to incline your wayward heart to His truth. He will not despise your prayer; He will send the rays of His heavenly light into your trembling soul; He will make the rough ways plain, and you shall see the salvation of God.

Belief in mystery is in accordance with reason. "That which is contrary to mysteries in us is not reason, or the natural light, or the natural sequence of truths; it is corruption, it is error or prejudice, it is darkness" (Leibnitz). Unbelief is a sinful weakness of will and reason; it is the offspring of pride which begins with a ridiculous self-sufficiency and ends in despair. "Faith restores to the human soul its wings that were broken in its fall" (Plato). Therefore blame your wicked will for your unbelief, curb your inclinations to pride and vanity; throw yourself upon the assistance of the blessed Redeemer and say with the man of the Gospel: "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief" (St. Mark ix. 23).

XLVI.

Which Church is almost the same as the Catholic?

THERE is but one Church; all the rest are counterfeits. All Protestant denominations differ essentially from the Catholic Church; their teaching is diametrically opposed to Catholic doctrine. If some sects ape Catholicism, claim her name, imitate her form of worship, they thereby do not advance a step towards the true Church. We willingly recognize all

the fragments of Catholic truth to be found in these "Churches"; we have not the least doubt in the sincerity of their adherents, but the true Church, the spouse of Christ, will admit of no rival. No other Church bears a likeness to the Catholic Church. One who had earnestly searched for years to find the likeness of Christ's Church outside the Catholic communion and had investigated every shade of similarity, Cardinal Newman, asked the question: "How can you detect the sham, but by comparing it with the true? Your artificial flowers have the softness and brilliancy of nature, till you bring in the living article, fresh from the garden; you detect the counterfeit coin by ringing it with the genuine. So it is in religion. Protestantism is at best but a fine piece of waxwork, which does not look dead only because it is not confronted by that Church which really breathes and lives. The living Church is the test and the confutation of all false churches. The dazzling brightness of her glance, the sanctity beaming from her countenance, the melody of her voice, the grace of her movements" will prove her the bride of Christ.

Episcopalians frequently declare that their "Church" is almost the same as the Catholic Church; in fact, that the Anglican Church is a branch of the true Church and should be called Catholic as well as the Roman Church.

But the Episcopal Church is nothing but a well-dressed corpse; it is a branch, if you wish, but lopped from the vine of the true Church, withered and decaying. It has no divine life; its "bishops" and "priests" have no absolving and consecrating powers. Priesthood and sacrifice have ceased, and the channels of grace are stopped up.

On September 13, 1896, Pope Leo XIII. issued an Encyclical Letter ("*Apostolicae Curae*") in which he solemnly and definitively declared that orders conferred in the Anglican (Episcopal) rite are utterly null and invalid. English Protestants seemed to admire the candid and conscientious utterance of the Holy See, and the moderation and precision of the Pope's words. Many Anglicans, however, have discarded the true idea of the priesthood and the necessity of Orders. "We Englishmen," the *Times* said, "have never pretended to have valid orders in the sense of the Pope." The "Ritualists," however, had been anxious to have the validity of their orders recognized; to them the papal document was a severe blow. Even a few Catholic writers had previously cherished the hope that Anglican Orders might be pronounced valid; a reconciliation with the Church of Rome could thus be more easily effected. But truth is inexorable.

Henry VIII., separated from Rome, caused a schism, but retained the Catholic liturgy. All bishops and priests ordained

under him received valid orders. Under Edward VI., Thomas Cranmer carried out his plans, long before prepared in secret, of Protestantizing England. He wished to rid England of sacerdotalism; he therefore abolished the Missal and Pontifical; he introduced the Ordinal and instituted a new rite. This Ordinal changed and mutilated the matter and form of the sacraments. All orders conferred under Edward after 1550 were invalid. Queen Mary removed this Ordinal and all "ordained" or consecrated according to it, but Queen Elizabeth introduced again the new rite, the Ordinal of Edward, and deposed the true bishops. All Anglican bishops and priests since the days of Elizabeth have no episcopal or priestly character and in the sight of God are mere laymen.

Leo XIII. bases his decision not on historical ground, but on a twofold defect of form and intention (*propter defectum formae et intentionis*) which has vitiated all the Anglican ordinations performed according to the Ordinal of Edward VI., from 1550 to the present day. The constant practice of the Holy See has been to ordain unconditionally and absolutely all Anglican ministers who entered the priesthood since the days of the use of the Ordinal. The Pope of Rome, who is admittedly the only competent authority on earth to decide so grave a matter, has finally settled the question. The light has

gone out, and darkness hovers over the Episcopal Church. When the soul leaves the body, corruption sets in, which a costly and ornamented casket may hide, but cannot stay. Let us fervently pray to the Spirit of Truth that so many earnest and sincere men who are deceived by the tinsel and glitter of sham may come into the light of truth and enter the one living Church of the Crucified Saviour.

XLVII.

You Cannot Marry a Divorced Person.

God Himself laid the solid foundation of human society when He instituted and blessed marriage. Before the days of Christ, marriage was a holy state and binding before God. The blessed Saviour raised it to the dignity of a sacrament and made the union between husband and wife irrevocable and indissoluble. No cause whatever can justify, and no human power, civil or ecclesiastical, can authorize the breaking of a valid marriage completed between Christians. Hence the Catholic Church, the appointed custodian of Christ's Church, has always and everywhere proclaimed the indissolubility of the sacred marriage tie. She has never granted, and she never will grant, a divorce, strictly so called. She does not

claim any such power; she believes the granting of a divorce in the modern sense to be in direct opposition to the laws of God. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Divorces as granted by our civil courts are merely a farce; they have no dissolving force whatever. A divorced man or a divorced woman is not permitted to enter a second marriage during the life of his or her former partner.

It is true, the Catholic Church has declared marriages invalid, but only such marriages as were null and void from the beginning. This is not granting a divorce or breaking the marriage bond, but merely an official declaration that a certain marriage on account of invalidating causes was never a real marriage.

The Church permits occasionally, for grave reasons, separation from bed and board; but the marriage bond remains firm, and neither party can marry again during the lifetime of the other. No matter what crime a Christian man or woman may commit, it does not break, or give ground for breaking, the marriage bond. Our divine Saviour makes no exception. The prevarication of the wife who violates her plighted faith is no more a cause for divorce than the crime of an unfaithful husband. In this interpretation of Our Redeemer's words the Church is backed up by the testimony of all Christian antiquity.

With undying tenacity the Catholic Church clings to the principle of indissolubility, and her strict adherence to the law of the Gospel has prevented and still prevents untold miseries and numberless scandals, while it secures the foundations of society by guarding the sanctity of the home, by protecting innocent children and weak women against the lawlessness of men and the perversity of human hearts. Divorce is against God's ordinance. It marks the decline of Christian civilization wherever it is tolerated. It had no power in the ages of faith, romance, and chivalry. Divorce is "the fruitful cause of mutable marriage contracts; it diminishes mutual affection; it supplies a pernicious stimulus to unfaithfulness; it is injurious to the care and education of children; it gives occasion to the breaking up of domestic society; it scatters the seed of discord among families; it lessens and degrades the dignity of women; it springs from the corrupt morals of nations" (Leo XIII.).

If the impediments of marriage by which the Church has protected and hedged in its sanctity are carefully guarded, and if all her regulations are strictly observed, there is no reason why marriage should not be that which Christ intended it to be: a sacred union from which both man and wife derive holiness and happiness. But even after all the precautions have been taken, there will be

cases of matrimonial misery in which the law seems almost unbearable. Let the sufferer then learn his duty to bow to the general rule of the Supreme Lord, "who has made all things well." What are the evils of the few compared to the destructive results of opening the door ever so slightly to the dangers of divorce? If the sluices were once opened, the flood would rush in and no power could stem the torrent of iniquity that would sweep away the Christian home and family, and reduce society to the state of barbarism from whose dreadful yoke Christ and His Church have delivered us.

XLVIII.

Mixed Marriages are Injurious.

"Who can express," Tertullian asks, "the happiness of that marriage which the Church approves, which the Sacrifice confirms, and which blessing seals—angels announce it, and the Father ratifies it?"

Who can express, we may ask, the unhappiness of that marriage which the Church detests and condemns, which neither the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass confirms nor the blessing of the priest attends, which presents so many deformities and spiritual dangers? Such an unfortunate union is a mixed marriage, that is

a marriage of a Catholic with one outside the Church.

Marriage is not a matter of mere sentiment and caprice or natural affection: it is one of the most important events in the life of a man or woman, and it must be viewed in the light of reason and religion. To forget the religious nature of marriage is to expose the contracting parties to the dangers of a lifelong misery.

Mixed marriages are contrary to the natural, the divine, and the ecclesiastical law. They are contrary to the natural law, because the children of such a marriage are in imminent danger of losing the Catholic faith and becoming perverts. They are against the divine law; the Old and the New Testament forbid them. They brought on the universal corruption and induced God to send the flood. The Israelites were not allowed to seek wives among the Gentiles. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son. For she will turn away thy son from following Me" (Deut. vii. 3, 4). Even at the present day, the Jews look with horror upon the marriage of a Jew with a Christian. Mixed marriages are contrary to the laws of the Church, as we have stated. One of the most learned men that ever sat on the throne of Peter, Pope Benedict XIV., laments "that there are among Catholics persons who, shamefully demented by an

insane love, do not from their hearts abhor, and are not led entirely to abstain from these detestable nuptials which Holy Mother Church has unceasingly condemned and interdicted," and he "exhorts all faithful ministers of the Church to prevent, as far as they are able, Catholics from contracting such nuptials to the ruin of their souls."

The Church occasionally grants a dispensation, but she does it with her face half-averted, in the hope of saving the Catholic party from a dreadful curse and sacrilege. She never approves of it. The dispensation is the choice of two evils. The Church is frequently asked for a dispensation after all the preparations for the wedding have been made. No Bishop, however, can grant in his own name or power such a dispensation; only as delegate of the Vicar of Christ can he give permission to the Catholic party to enter into such an alliance, which has always been regarded by the Church as "unlawful, pernicious, disgraceful, and disastrous." Before granting the dispensation these guarantees are required as necessary, not only to preserve the Catholic party from being perverted by the non-Catholic, the former being, on the other hand, required to use every effort to withdraw the other from error, but also that the children of both sexes, to issue from the union, should be brought up exclusively in the sanctity of the Catholic religion.

But despite these conditions, signed and solemnly sworn to, whole generations are lost. Many an upright Protestant refuses to sign the above conditions, and I respect him for his refusal. Many more who sign them have no intention of obliging themselves by them. What troubles and afflictions follow such marriages, God alone could tell. As fellow-citizens we must do all in our power to persuade non-Catholics not to rush into misery by marrying a Catholic.

"But I have promised to marry him." Break your promise, for you should not keep a promise to do wrong.

Are there not many conversions resulting from mixed marriages? Yes, a few, but oh, the loss on the other side! In the majority of mixed marriages the children are lost to the faith. If you are a Catholic, the fact that your Church condemns such marriages should be a sufficient reason for you to avoid such an unhallowed union.

XLIX.

Education without Religion is Time and Money Wasted.

THE highest principle of all education for Christians must be found in the words of the Redeemer: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these

things will be added unto you." Man is not for this life alone, like the beast that perishes: this world is but the means to his end, and his end is the possession of God. Education, which is to help man in attaining his immortal destiny, must be essentially religious. Religion must guide all our actions; it must enter our daily life and be the motive of all our thoughts and aspirations. Life without religion is an insupportable burden, something to be detested, a dreadful curse.

It was reserved to modern times to attempt an educational system without a religious training. For a whole century a movement has been on foot to paganize the country with state schools from which religion is banished. These schools are un-American as they are un-Christian. The first schools established by the Puritans in New England were founded for a religious purpose. They were parish schools, and in conformity with the spirit of the American government and the constitution of the United States, which place the supports of public peace and prosperity in virtue and religion. Religious education is necessary even to good citizenship, and a true American should desire it because of the welfare of his country.

The Catholic Church disapproves of our modern system of state education. Why? Does the Catholic Church fear education? No, the Catholic Church has been at all times the friend and pro-

tectress of true learning and education. In the darkest period of history, she saved Europe from total ignorance and barbarism; she covered the earth with schools and universities; her monasteries became the storehouses of art and science. Who founded Oxford and Cambridge, Würzburg and Heidelberg, Prague and Vienna, Louvain and Salamanca,—seats of learning that will be remembered whilst there is a scholar on earth? The Catholic Church inspired the genius and developed the talents of an Augustine, a Thomas Aquinas, a Dante Alighieri, a Fra Angelico, a Raphael, a Michael Angelo, a Murillo, a Palestrina, a Joseph Haydn, and innumerable others. Who dares accuse her of being hostile to education?

The Catholic Church alone has the true principles of a solid educational system and she alone holds the key to the solution of all pedagogical problems, because she is founded on the rock of truth by the great educator of the human race. To teach is not to make man better or happier. Instruction may render him worse and more miserable. But, they object, "ignorance is the mother of vice." This is not true in all circumstances, not any more than the adage: "Ignorance is bliss." Certain kinds of knowledge breed moral diseases; knowledge of our duties to God, to our neighbor, and ourselves makes us good and wise. Our modern pedagogics are a glittering structure with rich

columns and carved capitals, with painted windows and tesselated floors, but without roof and without foundation. They stand on the shifting sands of modern philosophy; they are roofless of character and morality: they cannot brave the storms of adversity nor the heat of temptation. The physico-intellectual programme, from the scissors and dumbbells of the kindergarten to the savage athletics and wild philosophy of the high school and college, aims at an education without the moral element, fitting the child for an animal or purely natural life. Moral culture is absolutely necessary for a true education; but the sole motive of morality is religion, which places the child under restriction, under the eyes of a Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, to whom we are responsible for every thought, word, and action. You may tell children that they ought to be good and not to lie, curse, steal, quarrel, etc. Your "ought" has no power to curb their sinful inclinations. The knowledge of the fitness and propriety of a thing can be no motive for moving the will. There must be an authority to check the will, to impose its law upon the human heart, with the power to vindicate its authority. Where there is no law, there is no obligation.

Our public school system is a complete failure as an educational system; it is a loss of time and waste of money. Here are the opinions of four noted educators

in the country on our present system. Professor Morrison, of California, writes: "It is an educational system which fails to educate." General Brinkerhoff says: "First and foremost what is essential is to revolutionize our educational system from top to bottom, so that good morals, good citizenship, and ability to earn an honest living shall be its primary purposes, instead of intellectual culture as heretofore." Dr. Strong maintains that "morality apart from religion is the rattling of dry bones." Dr. Seeley surmises that "something is radically lacking in the American school system." This something, however, is the real basis and life of education: it is religion. "The natural sciences can never form the basis of true intellectual culture, nor satisfy the higher aspirations of the soul; consequently the people who make them their chief study become stunted alike in heart and intellect, and are imbued with gross materialism, and worship only the golden calf. This fetichism, now so prevalent both in science and in practical life, springs from the deification of matter and the eager pursuit of riches and ease" (Wagner).

The aim of public education is the material prosperity of the masses, to increase enjoyment and lessen suffering. The measure of happiness, they believe, depends on the measure of enjoyment. Therefore, a neglect of the fine arts, of the study of philosophy, the classics, uni-

versal history, is noticeable everywhere. Young men look for immediate and temporal results. They ask: Will such a study pay? A feverish search after gold renders real learning valueless. But material prosperity in itself is not conducive to virtue and contentment. "Riches are to virtue what baggage is to the army" (Bacon).

Those who are handling the great problem of our national education have to answer to God and their fellowmen for the consequences; they are obliged to give us, with the present system, a generation of moral, God-fearing men and women who may be safely entrusted with the domestic management and guardianship of the commonwealth, despite the fact that they are trained under the conviction that religion, the only basis of morality, is a proscribed and outlawed thing during the best and brightest hours of the day, through the tenderest and most impressionable years of life. The mechanism of our public schools is perfect; the method of instructing is admirable; but where is the soul of education? The results achieved are not only doubtful, but positively injurious to the Republic. The evil effects of this system appear daily. Millions of dollars are spent annually, and hungry politicians and selfish demagogues are clamoring for more to offer to Moloch, who inflates the minds and devours the hearts of so many innocent children. And

where is the end of it all? Without claiming the gift of prophecy, we see it go down with a tremendous crash at no distant day. The common sense and still Christian sentiment of our American people will make up for the evil effects of a system of godless and heartless education. Some people may fail to see the coming disasters. "But the handwriting is on the wall: and there are a hundred thousand Daniels who have come forward to translate it into identical words. People are eating and drinking and making merry. So it was when the waters came and covered the earth; so it was the very night when the Assyrian came down on Babylon; so it was when Goth and Vandal swept over what was once the peaceful empire of Augustus; so it was when the guillotine sprang up like a mushroom in the night, right in the heart of the world's fashion and license; so comes the earthquake, the cyclone, the flood; so comes every disaster that befalls men and families and states" (Fr. Poland).

L.

Woman's Equal Rights.

THE question has been frequently put: Which one is the more perfect sex, male or female? There is naturally (or rather

physically) an essential difference between man and woman. Each one, however, is a perfect work of God with proper functions and duties. In the first and highest duty both man and woman are equal: it is the duty to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, and thereby attain eternal happiness. In religion, both are perfectly equal. Both have the same religious obligations and the some means to reach their sublime destiny, the possession of God. This equality is not admitted outside the Christian religion. In Japan, at the present day, women are not allowed to pray; they are deemed unworthy of this duty; they are merely permitted to sigh and grunt when men are praying. The religion of Christ has established full equality between man and woman: "There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Gal. iii. 28). And though woman be excluded from the priestly office, she is the equal of man in the means of sanctification. She may attain to the highest degree of perfection and to the highest honor in the Church by being raised upon our altars as a canonized saint. Thus we meet female saints in every age, in every clime, and in every walk of life. We meet some of the noblest and loveliest characters in the earliest centuries, such as Sts. Domitilla, Priscilla, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cæcilia; in the Middle Ages, the Empress St. Kunigunda, the Queen St. Margaret, the servant girls

Sts. Christina, Blandina, and Zitta. You may find among pagan nations types of splendid women, but no saints. The life of one of our Sisters who for the pure and sole love of God serve as angels of mercy, peace, and light, in our hospitals and asylums, surpasses in real value all the dazzling and noisy manœuvres of worldly women of ancient and modern times.

Woman, however, is under the dominion of man, according to the expressed will of the Creator: "Thou shalt be under the power of man, and he shall dominate" (Gen. ii. 16). Man possesses a masterful superiority, because "man is the head of the woman" (Eph. v. 23). There is a deal of foolish talk in our days about women's rights and women's wrongs, owing to the sad fact that so many have lost the true knowledge of the divine will as revealed in the Bible. From an infidel standpoint woman is described as being in a kind of slavery or servitude. She has to be freed, they say, from an unjust condition; for she is free and equal with man in all things. It will be the glorious task reserved for our time and country to give woman her proper position in society, as the equal of man. This is nothing but a silly and ignorant declamation. The Church has defined woman's position at the beginning, and she never changes her principles. Man is head and king; he presides, reasons, judges, and commands. His strong frame,

his broad shoulders, fit him for labor; his swift feet carry him over hill and dale in search of bread. God gave him the earth to till it and to exercise his dominion over it. Woman is of a frail and delicate constitution; nature has destined her to guard the home of man. Her brain is small; she reasons with the heart and not with the head. Her heart is a treasure-house of love, which causes her untold joys and sorrows. Love is her life: she loves without limits, and she hates without limits, because her love is so intense and boundless. She is capable of the most refined delicacy of feeling and tact. All her hopes and aspirations are beyond the mere material world; she lives in the ideal, and she is naturally religious. Every virtuous young man looks upon woman as something mystically sublime and godlike; he treats her with sacred awe, even with a sacramental reverence.

The Creator inclines the heart of woman to obey man. In this her loving submission to man she raises herself to her womanly dignity. She finds her happiness in obedience, and her earthly and eternal reward. She respects him who is strong to command, but is tempering his command with affection. God has defined her destiny when He spoke: "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a helpmeet like unto himself" (Gen. ii. 18). Whilst he retains his authority as head and guide, she becomes, not his

servant or slave, but his companion and helpmate, yes, his most intimate friend on earth, nearer to him than father or mother or any being in the world.

Woman has a mission of her own. Her work must be the work of woman. It is the curse of our days to force woman into labor in factories, stores, and public offices, for which neither her physical nor moral constitution fit her. She has a work that man cannot perform. Let her confine herself to her work. She should not be dabbling in the study of the ancient classics, philosophy, and the sciences. Even in literature her influence has ever been enfeebling. Let her keep within that enchanted circle which God drew around her. We turn with loathing from the so-called blue-stocking, and from the woman who, forgetting her sex and throwing aside the veil of modesty, ascends with brazen face the platform, dons the cap and gown of a college professor, declaims at reform clubs or in lecture rooms, and advocates rights which if granted would prove suicidal to her social standing. But we honor and esteem the humble and bashful maiden, the meek and tender wife, the chaste and loving mother. We willingly admit that life on earth would be more dreary and desolate without the true and dignified woman which God gave to man for his help and consolation. All the charms of nature, the singing of birds, the beauty and fragrance of flowers, could

not replace the innocent smile and merry laughter of the pure-hearted girl, or the sunny cheerfulness of the affectionate wife, or the enduring patience and soothing mildness of the Christian mother. The religion of the Crucified has flung around her a charm of mystery which art and nature cannot produce. By forcing her into public life and exchanging her duties for those of man, you deprive her of her fascinations and essential qualities. Her sphere is home; there are her functions, rights, and privileges which no true man will ever question. There she is really great and noble; there she is the queen who rules supremely by her patience and courage, her quick sensibility and earnest sympathy. Whether her home be a palace or a log-house, she has the native talent to make it bright and attractive. She pours around that home a peace and tranquillity which gold cannot buy nor man imitate. Without religion, woman becomes a veritable monster, whose presence betokens woe and misery, and whose companionship makes man the bearer of a cruel burden. In the religon of Christ she takes her place as the equal of man before God, the queen of his affections, the nurse of his childhood and the soother of his old age. Let her make due and grateful acknowledgment to her blessed Redeemer, who alone is the teacher of woman's equal rights.

LI.

Why Priests do not Marry.

THOSE who understand the true nature of the Christian priesthood see the practical necessity of clerical continency. The very thought of a married clergy has something repugnant in it to the Catholic instinct, or as Brownson puts it vigorously: "There would be a sort of bigamy in it, for the priest is wedded to the Church, his true spouse and our spiritual Mother." We do not claim an absolute necessity for clerical celibacy; but as the temporal power is ordinarily necessary to the Pope for the full and free exercise of his spiritual mission, so the celibate priest may be said alone to possess that complete freedom of self-sacrifice and devotion in the exercise of his sublime mission, by which he seeks to subject men to the dominion of Christ, teaching and sanctifying them, and thus leading them to seek the one thing necessary through which they are to attain eternal happiness. To be a priest means to replace Christ, to be guided by His spirit, and to live solely and directly for Him.

Priests do not marry, because it is the will (not the command) of our blessed Lord and the doctrine of His Apostles that they should lead single lives, unreservedly

consecrated to the service of God. The Apostles, the first priests of Christ, abandoned home, and those among them who had been married previous to their being called to the apostolate left their *wives* to follow Him with undivided affection. And the divine Master was pleased with such a renunciation, and showed them as recompense for it their heavenly thrones near His own in His kingdom, making at the same time the like promise to all who would follow their example (St. Luke xviii. 29). St. Paul, that faithful exponent of Christ's doctrine, shows the preference of the celibate state to that of marriage: "It is good for them (the unmarried) if they so continue, even as I" (I. Cor. vii. 8). He would that all men to whom it has been given were even as himself, single. Why? In order to be free, to escape the troubles of family life, and to attend, without care for wife, to the service of Christ.

It is an unquestionable fact that clerical celibacy existed both in the East and West, ever since the days of the Apostles. If there was no written law for the priest, it was because it was deemed unnecessary. The idea of marrying would hardly suggest itself to the minds of those who gave up all and followed the example of Christ. Pope Gregory VII. did not introduce clerical celibacy. Before him more than two hundred councils and synods had upheld its obligation. He simply en-

forced the old rule with characteristic energy and perseverance.

There is not to be found a single instance in all history when the Church recommended marriage to any of her consecrated ministers. Yet she honors and reverences the Sacrament of Matrimony, and her priest is the guardian of its sanctity. But her mind is that priests should love Christ more than all the world. It is this love of Christ that inspires him to lead a chaste and continent life; and the Master gives the needed grace. Those who say it is impossible for man to lead a pure and single life are a lecherous crew, unworthy of attention; they would deliver man to the curse of a beastly necessity and bring human nature down to the level of the brute. Even pagans honored chastity and believed it possible for man to live continently. In nearly every sphere of life we find men devoting themselves to the carrying out of some great and noble design and foregoing the ties and the attractions of married life. The greatest theologians, philosophers, historians, and painters were men who led single lives. They had, so to speak, no time to marry; they lived in a clearer atmosphere than the ordinary mortals; they had higher ideals than "the female form divine." Thoughtful men, such as Leibnitz and Böhmer, considered single life the proper one for a man who devotes himself to the higher studies of philosophy and history.

No candidate for Holy Orders is forced to pronounce the vow of chastity, and the Church never obliged any one to lead a single life. But none will deny that the Church has a perfect right to prescribe the conditions on which a man wishing to consecrate his life to God in the priesthood may find the realization of his desires. No one is compelled to become a priest; consequently no one is forced to take up the life of celibacy. The Church even warns the candidates for the priesthood against acting hastily; she tries them severely, puts them through a long and arduous course of studies and discipline, and when the final step is taken, throws around her consecrated ministers a wall of protection in her canonical statutes. But in spite of all these precautions and safeguards a priest may and occasionally does take a low view of his sublime calling and defile the garb of sacerdotal holiness. Among the twelve Apostles of the Lord there was a traitor who thought more of money than of his exalted office. We do deny, however, that marriage is the best and only means to offset the concupiscence of the flesh. Does anybody dare maintain that there are less offences against the marriage vow among the married ministers than there are against the vow of celibacy among Catholic priests? There are other means far more efficacious than marriage to neutralize and curb the evil inclinations of human nature, and these

means are prayer, sacraments, mortification, and the avoidance of all dangerous occasions.

The man who consecrates himself to God in the priesthood and who devotes his whole life to works of religion, charity, and education, must be free from the trammels of family life, and from the engrossing cares of domestic obligation. "He that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided" (I. Cor. vii. 33).

A man who enters the Catholic priesthood does not take upon himself its obligations for money or money's worth. Those who flippantly assert that the priest makes money out of his profession, "like any other professional man," are "beating the air." He who would become a priest for money or a good living would be a fool. The priest's life is a trying one, full of care and privation. He is not "paid" for his labors, nor does he receive a salary in proportion to his talents and work. His education, his mental and bodily exertions, would demand a remuneration higher than that of any lawyer, physician, or surgeon in the land; he receives, generally speaking, a scanty support. The majority of the priests in America are poor, even penniless. A young man prepares himself for the priesthood because he feels a calling from God, and he desires to consecrate all his

faculties of soul and body to Him. He has no intention "to make money like other men." He wishes to live poor like his Master. And as a priest he becomes the father of the orphans and widows. The bereaved and afflicted look up to him as their dearest and most generous friend. Look around you and count the number of orphan asylums, hospitals, and schools for the poor which Catholic priests have established and maintained within the last fifty years. No earthly father is required to make such sacrifices as is the priest who devotes himself to the temporal and spiritual welfare of his flock. His purity and detachment are the secret of his priestly strength and influence. And those who refuse to love him are forced to respect and admire him as a man of God and of the people.

LII.

What goes on in Convents.

A most deplorable fact exists to a certain extent among non-Catholics in various parts of the country, a deadly prejudice against religious orders, an evil suspicion of Catholic institutions. Convents are still regarded as gloomy places where women disappointed in early love or deluded by a fanatical spirit are

relegated to a life of despair. The inmates of such places are supposed to be either hypocrites or lazy, stupid women, or fanatics torturing themselves to death by useless penances and austerities. It argues an appalling want of mere natural charity thus to think and talk of women who speak the same tongue as we do, bear the same form, breathe the same air, and are of the same race.

We occasionally hear the praises of our Sisters and Nuns chanted by those who came near enough to them to witness their heroic deeds on battlefields and in hospitals, who have noticed the perennial smile on their lips and their simple and unaffected ways in the service of the sick and poor. Those, however, who have studied the nature and regulations of our convents and have entered into the spirit of conventual life, and have discovered the mainspring of it—the love of our blessed Redeemer—praise God for all the good done in these convents.

The inmates of our convents are called Nuns, or in a familiar term, Sisters. A good dictionary will tell you that a Nun is a woman devoted to a religious life under a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to a superior of an order or community of the Church. She is one whom God has called to higher perfection and closer union with Himself, whom the heavenly Bridegroom invited by the words of the Psalmist: "Hearken, O daughter,

and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty; for He is the Lord thy God" (Ps. xliv. 11, 12). She has heeded the invitation: she has left father and mother, home, and all that gives charm to life; she has renounced her very name, and is dead to the world and living for Him alone "whom her soul loveth." And though separated from the world and shut up in a convent, the Sister becomes the most useful member of our republic. No class of women contribute so much to the welfare, prosperity, and stability of our country as those who live in our convents. And if our Sisters did nothing else than pray in their convents, these would be the most important institutions in the land; for prayer is the most important factor in the shaping of beneficent events. The Sisters do more than pray: their presence and example are a protection to the innocent maiden and a constant rebuke to the wayward and sensuous; their words bring comfort to the weary, and their smiles are a benediction to the poor and suffering. "Woman," Bishop Spalding says, "without father or mother, or brother or sister, loving Christ only and the children whom He loved, the poor and sick, is the heavenliest image of God's charity and tender mercy, that walks the earth." These consecrated women are wives and mothers of a higher, because

spiritual, order: they are wedded to the Holy Spirit; they become mothers to the motherless, to the ignorant and the destitute. They are the most powerful lever of society, constantly elevating its moral tone, softening hearts, healing wounds, and shedding peace and light along the pathway of life.

To the inmates of our convents, to their indefatigable labors in the schoolroom and in the sick-ward, is due in no small degree the wonderful development of the Church in the United States. The Bishops of America, assembled at the Second Baltimore Council, expressed their fervent thanks to God for the number and variety of our religious Orders and Congregations, and their sincere gratitude to our noble Sisters for their holy and effective work among us, and they add, "Which one of us, though he be a non-Catholic, can refrain from admiring the exhaustless patience of our Sisters in hospitals, their kindness towards all, their singular modesty, or who could think of another cause for such great virtues than the special assistance of the Spirit of God as he is forced to say 'The finger of God is in this work'?"

The life of the Sisters in convents is a well regulated life of prayer and work. The different hours of the day are so portioned out that no time is lost and all is sanctified and devoted to God's service. But it is a happy life. In no house can

children be happier than are the Sisters in their sacred home. A visit to any of our convents or a talk with one familiar with convent life will dispel foolish and prejudicial notions and fill you with admiration for our religious women.

Whenever you meet a Sister, lift your hat and show that you honor and respect this type of Christian womanhood. Remember she is a lady of superior quality and rank, dear to God and most useful to her country.

LIII.

There is a Hell Waiting for the Wicked.

How is it possible that a merciful God could punish with eternal misery poor human beings for slips and faults of natural weakness? Why does He create them? Does He rejoice in calling persons into existence to damn them? God created us for eternal happiness; heaven is our destiny. Those who succeed in damning themselves, do it against the will of God. God, though infinite in His mercy, is infinite in all His perfections: He is infinitely just. No punishment which He can inflict upon him who dies in mortal sin will be commensurate with His justice unless that punishment be boundless in its intensity and eternal in its duration.

I do not understand how anybody can believe in a God without believing in everlasting punishment. The very existence of God calls for a hell of the wicked where the worm never dies and the fire shall never be quenched. He who dies in mortal sin remains in that sin, as the Scripture assures us: "Wherever the tree falleth there it shall lie." He remains for all eternity as he died: the enemy of God. And God must for all eternity treat him as His enemy. Reason, I repeat, requires the existence of hell; therefore, all ages and all nations have believed in it. The pagans firmly believed in it; they spoke of the wicked dead as suffering endless banishment and as being condemned to endless labor and torment.

It is no credit to our enlightened age if it records the names of individuals who became conspicuous by sneering at the mention of hell, who pretended there was no such place or state as hell-fire or everlasting punishment. Does such an impudent denial destroy the doctrine of hell? Besides, hell is not an opinion, and not even a mere doctrine, but hell is a real fact; reason and revelation convince us of the existence of this fact. Can a man do away with a fact by denying it? Is there no such city as San Francisco, because you deny it on the ground that you never saw it? Does the sun cease to shine as soon as you state: The sun is not shining? Moreover, did ever a learned

man prove that there was no hell? Voltaire and Rousseau made a desperate attempt to prove the non-existence of hell, but all that these blasphemers accomplished was to assert boldly that perhaps there was no hell. Against such a silly *perhaps* we have sound reason supported by the infallible word of God to convince us of hell. Yes, there is a hell, and those who refuse to believe in it will be cast into it forever. The wicked may wish that there be no hell and laugh at the idea of it: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shall say to them on the last day: "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." Such is the just retribution of mortal sin, which is a turning away from God for the sake of a created thing. The damned are deprived of ever seeing God. This is the greatest of all imaginable sufferings, and yet it is a most appropriate punishment: He who has rejected God on earth, shall be rejected by Him for all eternity.

As soon as the wicked soul leaves the body in death, it shall realize the irreparable loss of God and find itself cast away from the face of God forever. It shall be sunk into the flames of hell, into a sea of fire. The soul, without the body, can be reached by this fire; God shall cause all those sensations in the soul which it had when lodged in the body. The fire of hell, set ablaze to punish the

wicked, is not like earthly fire; it does not consume, but preserves; it does not give light, but causes extreme darkness.

The unspeakable torment of hell is waiting for you if you die in a grievous sin. Make up your mind to avoid such an eternal misfortune at the risk of losing everything temporal.

LIV.

Did Anybody ever come back from the Other World?

Saints and Doctors of the Catholic Church give frightful descriptions of hell. They tell us of the tortures of the damned, which are so horrible that the mere consideration of them makes us shiver and shudder. But how do we know it is so? Nobody ever came back from the other world, says the scoffer triumphantly; for "out of hell there is no redemption." This very fact, which is sometimes held up as an objection against the doctrine of hell, should warn the sinner. If no one ever escaped from hell, if there be no possibility of ever returning from that place of woe, why do you not make sure to avoid falling into it?

Suppose, however, that nobody ever came from the other world to tell us how matters stand, would that deprive us of

all information concerning hell? Nobody ever came from the moon, and yet we know a great deal about the moon. But somebody did come from the other world whose word we cannot doubt: Jesus Christ, infallible Truth itself, the very One who created hell and cast the rebellious spirits into it, He came from the other side to tell us all about it. He came exactly to save us from hell-fire. For this reason He came, and toiled and taught and suffered and died. He certainly knew all about that place and he who dares contradict Him is beyond the pale of salvation. Read that parable of Dives and Lazarus (St. Luke xvi. 19--31), in which Our Lord called up a voice from hell to tell us about the nature of the eternal punishment inflicted upon the godless and heartless Dives. "Lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he begged of Abraham to have mercy on him and to send him Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water to cool the burning tongue; for, he added, I am tormented in this flame." Even this small favor, which would bring but an imaginary relief—what would a drop of water avail on a fiery furnace?—is denied to the damned.

In the same parable, Christ refutes the foolish saying of indifferent Christions: If I go to hell, I will not be there all alone; I will have plenty of company. Many of my acquaintances will be there;

they are more wicked than I am at present. Dives asks for a messenger to be sent to his brothers in the world in order to warn them. Their arrival would bring no relief, but new torture to him. Here on earth, suffering begets sympathy and the fact that others are suffering in the same way, brings comfort; but in hell the opposite will be true. Companionship in hell increases despair. The son will curse and torment the father that led him into sin by bad example. The daughter will curse the wicked mother who made her vain and worldly, and did not warn her against evil. The wife will curse her drunken husband, etc. Company will not lighten, but heighten the sufferings of hell.

Whether you believe in what I have said or not, whether you can see or not see that God shall punish the wicked with the everlasting flames of hell, does not change in the least the truth of it. Ask God to open your eyes, and let you see what awaits you if you refuse to love and serve Him. Ask Him, if it be necessary to save you from hell, to send you in His mercy any form of affliction, to make you poor and despised, to strike you with the most revolting disease, to let you die the most shocking death rather than lose Him and burn in hell forever.

LV.

God wants us in Heaven.

It is the expressed and determined will of God that all should be saved and come to His heavenly kingdom. It is not a mere wish or desire on the part of God, but it is an earnest will to accomplish this purpose, and to secure the necessary means. St. Paul clearly announces this doctrine that all men without a single exception are called to heaven and all men have the necessary means to go there. "I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for *all men.* . . . For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, *who will have all men to be saved,* and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Who gave Himself a redemption for *all*" (I. Tim. ii. 1—6). As God is the Creator of all, so He is the Saviour of all mankind. Christ died for all, without exception. Grace (a supernatural help) is given to every man in the world to come to the knowledge of the truth and to be converted to God; for He "is not willing that any should

perish, but that all should return to penance" (II. St. Peter iii. 9). In and through Jesus Christ, all men are to be cleansed from sin and thus to be prepared for heaven: "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (I. St. John ii. 2). If any one is lost, it happens against the holy will of God. He has given man as the noblest endowment of human nature the gift of liberty: He therefore cannot force man into heaven; He must leave him in the full exercise of his liberty. All those who live up to the dictates of their conscience and make use of the proffered grace of the blessed Redeemer may confidently expect heaven as their future and eternal home. Our Lord is distinctly telling us that He is waiting for us in heaven: "In My Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you, that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you: I will come again, and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be" (St. John xiv. 2, 3). House of my Father, home of my Saviour,—could He promise more? The sweetest spot in all creation, the place where we feel really at home, is the house of our earthly father. But how long does it last as a home? Children grow up and by the force of circumstances are driven away from home. Father and mother grow old and die. The once happy home

is deserted or sold to the stranger, and when in later years we see that former home, we pass it with sadness of spirit and a sharp pain in the lonely heart. But there is a home awaiting you and me: a true and unchanging home where the children of God dwell together in never-ending peace and joy. The beauty of those mansions surpasses all description: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. Cor. ii. 9). In that land of the blessed, the roses bloom without thorns and every wish of the heart shall be satisfied; every doubt and anxiety of the mind shall be cleared away. The greatest delight of the inhabitants of heaven shall consist in seeing God in His ineffable beauty and in being with Him forever.

When trials and temptations are pressing heavily upon you, then remember that they lead to heaven, your home, which is worth all the crosses and troubles of life. "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). Only a little while, and all will be over. One short struggle and the battle will be won, and the crown will be on your brow. But remember likewise that if you die in mortal sin, heaven will be lost forever. Do not barter the joys of heaven for the

toys and trumperies of this world. Onward! Upward! First the cross, and then the crown.

LVI.

Sin is the Greatest and Only Evil.

"The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say, should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse." These trenchant words of Cardinal Newman sum up the whole Christian doctrine on the nature and malice of sin. Yes, sin is the greatest evil on earth. In fact there is no other evil here below, sin is really the only evil. Poverty, loss of fortune, sickness, imprisonment, disgrace, death,—any kind of pain and suffering that could torment us, are no evils when viewed from a Christian standpoint; they are so many means of penance and atonement, of purification and strength, which a merciful God can send to bring us nearer unto Himself. Sin is the only misfortune that can befall and harm us in this world.

We should be willing to suffer death in its most cruel and repulsive form a thousand times rather than be guilty of the slightest infringement of the divine law, by even a sinful thought.

Sin is any thought, word, deed, or omission against the law of God. The law of God is His own will. He who sins insults God, our sovereign Lord and best Father. He rises in rebellion against his Creator. He turns away from God for the sake of created things; he disturbs the order and harmony of nature, and is guilty of the basest ingratitude. And he who sins mortally becomes a traitor to the Redeemer, a deserter from the army of Christ: he crucifies again our blessed Saviour; for the Apostle distinctly says, "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery" (Heb. vi. 6).

We know from the Bible how God hates and punishes mortal sin. There were bright and beautiful spirits in heaven, destined to enjoy the glory of God forever; they committed one mortal sin, and they instantly lost their splendor and brilliancy; they were changed into hideous devils and thrust into the eternal flames of hell. Adam and Eve committed one sin; they were at once deprived of their supernatural charms, expelled from paradise, and became subject to poverty, sickness, and death. Remember the devastation of the world by the flood, and the rain of fire and brimstone on Sodom and

Gomorrha, in punishment for sin. And are not all the trials that now afflict mankind the consequence of sin? "Sin brings misery upon the nations of the earth" (Ps. xiv. 34).

There are wicked men who maintain that sin is but a natural weakness of character, a freak of human nature, and therefore a mere trifle. We know from the Scriptures how God regards sin, and we will not be led astray by lying teachers.

If you have committed but one mortal sin, you have deserved the pains of hell; you have forfeited your claim to heaven, because you have abandoned God and followed the evil one. If the just God would cut the thin thread on which your life is hanging, you would fall into the grasp of fiery demons and be burning in flames. How lightly is sin committed, despite the infallible truth that sin is the greatest and only evil! How prevalent are the sins of drunkenness, impurity, cursing, swearing, anger, vindictiveness, lying, stealing, neglect of Mass on Sundays! And yet, men act as if sin were the least evil; they sin to escape a momentary pain and to afford themselves a momentary pleasure. And when the voice within them warns in rebuking tone, they quiet themselves with the thought that sin cannot be so evil a thing as priests say and books teach,—that God could not punish them for so trifling an affair. What says the Apostle of Christ?

"Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God?" By the unjust are meant all those who persevere in mortal sin. He goes on to specify them: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God" (I. Cor. vi. 9, 10). Saints have wondered how people dared commit sin. It is a sort of mystery how people can eat and drink and sleep whilst they are in sin. St. Augustine truly observes: "One who commits mortal sin must have lost either his faith or his reason; he must be an infidel or a lunatic: either he has no faith and does not believe in the existence of hell, or else, if he believes and still sins, he must be out of his mind."

Watch and pray to escape the greatest and only evil. Avoid the occasions of sin; for "he that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27). Frequently call to mind another text: "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent" (Ecclus. xxi. 2).

LVII.

Drunkenness is Bad, but not the Worst.

THROUGH the vice of drunkenness "men have compared themselves to sense-

less beasts, and have become like to them" (Ps. xlviii. 13). Heaven's light, divine grace, is extinguished in their souls, and people turn away from them with loathing and disgust. Their children live in filth and rags, and their houses have not the appearance of the abode of human beings. Home should be a place of peace and love: the home of the drunkard is the vestibule of hell; hatred and disorder dwell in it; every comfort and enjoyment have departed from it. Money, good name, and health are wasted; social standing and business relations are destroyed; the drunkard stops short of nothing. Wife, children, and parents are driven to ruin by this terrible vice. Hearts are broken, hopes are blighted, and souls are damned forever. Ah, there is the harm! The image of God is disfigured in the soul, and the noblest gifts of man are wrecked. Jesus Christ stands powerless beside the man dying in drunkenness.

There is another sin worse than drunkenness, because more deadly in its nature and more injurious in its effects: the sin of impurity. Every sin is a turning away from God, but impurity turns the heart away from Him more fully and occupies the mind more completely than all the rest. God is abandoned entirely for the sake of a beastly idol. There is no vice which seems to provoke the wrath of the Almighty so fearfully as the unclean sin. He destroyed the whole human

race, with the exception of eight persons, on account of this sin: "My spirit shall not remain in man forever." Why, O Lord God? "Because he is flesh," he is impure and abominable in My sight. "It repenteth Me that I have made them." And He opened the floodgates of heaven; torrents, oceans rushed down in fury upon the unclean world to wash away the filth of iniquity. "And all men, and all things wherein there was the breath of life on the earth, died" (Gen. vii.). Again we read in the Holy Book that "twenty-four thousand Israelites were slain," because they had committed the dark sin (Num. xxv.). A similar extermination struck terror into the hearts of the Jews. "Twenty-five thousand and one hundred, all fighting men of the tribe of Benjamin," were killed, because a few among them had been guilty of wicked deeds (Judges xx.). Humanly speaking, God must bear the most supreme hatred against this sin.

No other vice so blinds the understanding; eternal truths are put aside or forgotten. God, heaven, hell, death, and judgment are disregarded. Impure desires represent only what is flattering to passions and conceal what is calculated to deter from sensual indulgence. All the bitter consequences and torments of impurity are kept in the background. The impure man loses all taste for prayer and religious devotions; he loses all shame and

self-respect; his will is hardened in wickedness: he cannot rise from the mire, his will power has left him; he is both a fool and cursed slave.

The voice of conscience proclaims the hideousness and enormity of this sin. It tells man that impurity defiles soul and body, and degrades the nobility of human nature. A certain feeling of shame naturally moves the heart, and from a heart still pure, or loving purity, the blood rushes up and mantles the cheek. But even the libertine seeks the secret nook, the darkness of the night, to cover his crime.

Impurity is a hydra-headed sin; for "no sinner is so ready to offend God as the impure" (St. Thomas). See the sacrileges, thefts, the reading of obscene books, intemperance in drinking to deaden the cries of conscience. Listen to the evil conversation carried on at the corners of streets, in parks, social clubs, bar-rooms, workshops, on the platform of the electrics, in the Pullman smokers. What a muddy stream of immorality springs from this hideous sin! Evil is preached on all sides; impurity is spread through the press and literature of the day; it leers from bill posters and cards of advertisement. Many factories, stores, and workshops have become places of evil example and contamination. And what draws a crowded house at the theatres? What makes the hoary sinner in the front row

gloat with impure eyes upon the stage? What kind of pictures do you find in our museums, or of statues in our parks? They call it art and they lie. You cannot cover such nudities with the name of art; it is dirt and filth. It is not natural, but below human nature, because nature instinctively hides such abominations. What idolatry! Men sacrificing their honor and health, their peace and hope of heaven, to the idol impurity; they perjure their immortal souls and ruin the souls of so many others to gratify their brutal passions. Think of the ruin and injury caused to so many generations by the impure Luther and the lustful Henry VIII.! What can be done to stem the tide of evil? The Catholic Church possesses the effective remedies in her sacraments and religious devotions. Go to her for power to conquer the evil and for the graces to lead a pure life.

LVIII.

Killing Time.

A COMMON saying: Time is money. A wise use of time and watchful endeavor to derive profit from opportunities will bring a thrifty man into the possession of money. But money passes with time itself; it has not, in itself, any value for

eternity; on the contrary, it is generally a great drawback. It will be Christian to say: Time is God. Hence the value of time. By every moment of time well spent the grace of God and glory of paradise may be secured and increased. Time badly spent prepares for eternal misery. Time therefore brings a dreadful responsibility, as it may be used for good or evil. Its loss is irreparable; we may grieve over time wasted and abused, we shall never be able to recall it. "No loss is of greater moment than the loss of time" (St. Bonaventure). The attempt to "kill time" is both insane and sinful. The whole weight of eternity is balancing on this moment. The past is gone forever, the future is uncertain, the present instant only is mine—mine to utilize it for eternity. What an overwhelming truth! "To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xciv. 8). *To-day*, the Spirit of God says, not to-morrow, for morning may never dawn on you again. What would a damned soul give to have one moment to repent? A million of years of the most excruciating sufferings would be readily exchanged for one minute of time. But time shall be no more when life is over. One sinful moment, however, may bring an eternity of pain. Man is like a rope-dancer, St. Chrysostom remarks; if he makes one awkward step, he may lose his balance and break his neck. "Whilst we have time,

let us work" (Gal. vi. 10). We have to answer to God for what we have left undone, for our omissions.

We cannot always work; health requires a certain amount of recreation to preserve it. Necessary recreation is using time well, not wasting it. There is, however, a large amount of time "killed" by a considerable number of people who give themselves to indiscriminate reading. The morning paper is deemed as necessary as breakfast. The best hour of the day is "killed" in running over the "news." Lengthy descriptions of accidents, divorce suits, elopements, domestic scandals, etc., are devoured with eagerness. Does a person *know* more after the perusal of our voluminous journals, especially of the Sunday editions? Is the mind improved thereby? Mind and heart are suffering from flatulency after such a morning treat. Should not every man be posted on the news? We can get all the daily news worth knowing in two minutes. Besides the daily and weekly papers, we have a number of magazines, novels, and story papers presented to the reading public to kill some more of their precious time. We should read good books and read them slowly; good books are our best and most useful companions. But those books of fiction that constantly flood the market are ruinous; they preach a false ideal of life and make people unhappy. Their ideals are emancipation from par-

ental authority, fortune by a lucky chance, adventure, travels to strange countries, love-matches, etc. There is a general mental and spiritual debauch of reading. Our public libraries are not used for serious study and mental improvement, except in a very few instances: generally they are places where our young people "kill time" by reading stories and novels, looking at pictures or staring vacantly at surroundings.

"Reading is a kind of craze," President Gilman of Johns Hopkins University remarked, "that has got hold of the people. It is a dangerous habit, like a stimulant. The publishers are constantly putting forth new attractions in the field, and the reviewers excite our appetites. It is no doubt very pleasant to be up to date, well posted and in the swim about the latest issues from the press, but we are all in danger of reading too much."

Before you take a book in hand to read, ask yourself these questions: Will this book really benefit me? Will it make me better and wiser? Would I care if death surprised me with this book in my hand? If you can honestly answer these questions with a confident "Yes," then go ahead and read it; otherwise throw it aside, or better into the fire. Neither you nor others can afford to "kill time."

LIX.

We shall Rise from our Grave.

As soon as we die, our soul stands before God and is judged. And this judgment is irrevocable; it decides the fate of the soul for all eternity. The body, the house of the soul, has become cold and useless. It is reverently laid beneath the sod to crumble into dust and mingle with the earth which sustained it during life and from which it was originally taken. But the body shall not always remain in the grave. The earth, which is nothing after all but one huge cemetery, must give back its dead.

After the total destruction of earth and sky, at the end of time, the earth will appear as a heap of ashes. A universal conflagration has destroyed everything. But now the hour has come when the awful silence of death is broken. What hour? "The hour wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (St. John v. 28, 29). The trumpet of the angel of the Lord shall ring out in shrillest tones over land and

sea to announce the day of resurrection. Then, as St. Paul informs us, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, the dead shall rise again" (I. Cor. xv. 52). They shall rise from every country and nation, from beds of rivers and depths of ocean, from marble tombs and neglected graves, from battle-fields and cathedral vaults,—and they shall all hasten to the place of judgment.

What a difference in appearance, however, between those that come back to life! The good will rise in their glorified bodies, without a trace of sickness, deformity, or decrepitude; like unto the risen body of Christ, shining as the sun, swift as thought, beautiful beyond human expression. The wicked souls, on the contrary, shall be forced to enter their hideous and deformed bodies, black as night, ugly as demons, terrible as hell.

We shall rise in our own bodies, not in those of others nor different in substance from those we had during our mortal life. Wherefore, the prophet of old said: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job xix. 25--27).

How is it possible, infidels ask, to rejoin the scattered elements and to collect the ashes of our bodies? Have not time and

nature reduced them to such a condition as to leave no vestige of their former existence? I answer, that nothing is annihilated (resolved into nothing) in creation. There is corruption or decay, which means nothing else but the dissolution of the component parts of an object: but not reduction into nothing. Almighty God, who made all things out of nothing, knows where the different parts of our corrupted bodies are, and He will be able to reconstruct them, which is easier than to create them. The Holy Spirit seems to answer all the objections of those who doubt the divine power, in the book of Ezechiel (xxxvii.) The prophet was carried in spirit on a boundless plain, which he saw covered with innumerable and exceedingly dry bones. The Lord asked him to command these bones to arise. Ezechiel spoke in the name of God when a marvellous sight presented itself. The dead bones began to move with a horrible clatter; they came together each one to his joint; the sinews and nerves grew on them; the flesh and skin were stretched over them. And now the Spirit breathed on them; they sprang up making a great noise, and in a moment the vast plain was swarming with living bodies, "an exceeding great army." Thus the Almighty will bring back to life all the bodies that ever lived and died upon earth.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the

body is an essential part of Christianity. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again, and if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain" (I. Cor. xv. 13, 14).

The justice of God requires that the body which has been the faithful instrument of the soul in praising and serving God should share in its glory. "Future reward is the cause of future resurrection" (Tertullian). On the other hand, the body that has served the soul in offending God and defacing His divine image by dragging it into the mire of sin, should be punished. The eyes that gloated on sinful objects; the ears that were open to uncharitable and godless words; the tongue that abused His holy name; the hands that were filled with iniquity; the feet that walked on the path of injustice; the heart that loved unholy things;—all the members of the body that have been in the service of sin must receive their retribution on the day of general retribution. We must rise in our bodies, as the Apostle declares, "that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" (II. Cor. v. 10).

Your body will rise out of the earth on the last day. This truth should influence your present life in the body; it should show you how to use your body. "If

you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" (Rom. viii. 13). If you live according to the sinful inclinations of the body, you shall be dead to grace and eternal happiness, and your body will be the evil companion of a cursed soul on the last day; but if your soul, in the light and strength of God, now rules your body, keeps it in subjection, and suppresses its vicious tendencies, then your body will rise to glorious and never-fading life. Treat your body as the temple of the Holy Ghost; keep it pure and undefiled. Its present actions decide its future condition. "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men" (Gal. vi. 8--10).

LX.

The Devil is after You.

THE last stage of infidelity is to deny the existence of the devil. Such a denial makes the devil's presence and influence

all the more powerful. The whole Christian doctrine is pledged to the existence of the devil, who is our most powerful and personal foe. No believer in the Bible can refuse to believe in the arch-enemy of our happiness. According to Holy Scripture, the devil is a real, living person of high intelligence and vast power. The Jews fully believed in such a being, and his activity is sufficiently indicated in the Old Testament. In the New Dispensation, the devil appears as the great adversary of Our Lord: first, in tempting Him in the desert; then asking for mercy when conquered and cast out from human bodies; finally persecuting Him, as His deadly enemy, to the cross on Calvary. In the parables of the sower and the cockle, Christ discovers the wicked devices of the evil one against the kingdom of heaven in destroying the good seed in the heart of man and oversowing cockle among the wheat, while men are asleep.

As Satan tempted and persecuted Christ, so he tempts and persecutes Christ's followers. He sets traps and lays snares for the unwary and keeps those captive who submit to his will. He carries on his work of seduction with great skill and cunning; he changes himself into an angel of light to hide his dark plans. He is not easily discouraged in his work of sin; when rejected, he renews his attacks with double force.

His influence extends over the human

body, of which he may take possession with divine permission. Our war against the devil must continue while the breath of life is within us. "Our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." He is after us, to devour us. We must fight to the bitter end if we wish to conquer and receive the crown of immortality.

The power of the devil is not derived from any natural right over man; it is the result of man's voluntary submission by sin. If you commit a mortal sin, you surrender yourself willingly to the slavery of the devil. The nature of this slavery consists in paying the penalty due to sin and in an exposure to the direct influence of Satan, who impels you to new sins and tortures you with various afflictions of soul and body.

The devil is after you constantly. He tempts you systematically, always and everywhere. He tempts you directly by the use of external means, by word and the example of wicked people; he tempts you directly by working on your senses and imagination. Though many temptations are caused directly by the flesh and the world, yet the devil never stands by as an idle spectator; he manipulates these temptations and turns them to his interests.

The more willingly you listen to the devil and the more stoutly you deny his existence, the more intimate you will grow

with the unclean spirit and the deeper you will descend into the mire of vice. Your outward appearance may not betray your companionship with the foul demon; you may be highly respected by men of the world; you may dress yourself in a costly and fashionable garb and move only in refined and cultured society, in reality you are a pool of iniquity, a grave of corruption.

What is to be done? "Put on the armor of God" (Eph. vi.). Be armed to the teeth with all the weapons which God and His Holy Church offer you for the fight. The battle rages but a short time. With God and His angels and saints you will conquer, and all will be peace and joy forever.

LXI.

Your Guardian Angel is always with You.

On earth there is nothing great beside the soul lodged in a human body. All else dwindles into insignificance when compared to the soul of man. A single soul, should it be the soul of a poor, ragged, deformed child or of a wretched tramp, of a social outcast, is worth more than the whole world with its cities and towns, its mountains and valleys, its seas

and rivers, and all they contain; it is of higher value and importance than the glowing sun in the heavens and the silvery moon at night and the countless stars set on the purple robe of the sky as so many glimmering and sparkling diamonds. Whence this worth of the soul? "It alone is immortal and imperishable." All else must fade and fall and disappear and cease to exist.

God alone fully understands the value of a soul. He became man to save souls. Every soul is purchased by the life-blood of God's Eternal Son. Pearls of infinite value, crimson drops of Christ's precious blood, are glistening on the human soul.

At the very dawn of existence, at the moment when the soul is united to the body (yes, even months before birth), God sends one of His angels to guard that soul during its earthly pilgrimage and to bring it safe to heaven.

Angels are simple, immaterial substances, endowed with intelligence and free will. They have visited occasionally the earth, clothed in human form, not that they were living in a corporeal life, but appearing as having bodies, and thereby becoming recognizable. They are more perfect beings than men. Their life in heaven is one perpetual hymn of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, in unending bliss; they form a perfect society with perfect order and subordination according to a difference of perfection and

function. They are interested in this world, and act here as ministers of divine Providence.

One of those celestial spirits has been appointed to serve as our guardian angel. He is always and everywhere at our side. "For He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. xc. 11). And so has your neighbor, even a little child; Our Lord wants you to reverence the least of human beings on that account: "See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (St. Matth. xviii. 10).

Our guardian angels love us, as the bad spirits hate us and endeavor to harm us. They prevent these devils from injuring us, as we learn from the book of Tobias (viii. 3): "Then the angel Raphael took the devil, and bound him in the desert of upper Egypt." We cannot have the slightest doubt that our guardian angels protect our bodies by warding off dangers that threaten us, and by preserving us from a multitude of accidents: "In their hands they shall bear thee up; lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xc. 11). "And the angel [said Jacob] that delivereth me from all evils, bless these boys" (Gen. xlviii. 16).

What a consoling doctrine! To have a powerful prince of heaven with you, shielding and defending you against the

attacks of the wicked one, against misfortune of every kind! When that holy maiden, the blessed St. Agnes, refused to offer sacrifice to the false gods, the judge threatened to have her taken to a house of sin. But she smiled and said confidently: "If you knew the power of the God I serve, you would never threaten me thus." When the judge's son went up to insult her, her angel struck him dead at her feet.

Our guardian angels suggest to us pious thoughts, encourage us to do good, to avoid evil. Wherefore the Scripture admonishes us: "Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and My name is in him" (Exodus xxiii. 21).

These faithful ministers of the Most High are deeply interested in our religious duties; they are anxious to see us pray and they carry our prayers to God. "When thou didst pray with tears, . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord" (Tob. xii. 12). They even join their prayers with ours and bring both before the heavenly throne. "And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the saints" (Apoc. viii. 3).

The dear angels assist us in a thousand ways, and, without our knowing it, preserve us from many dangers. Examine

the history of your own life, and you will soon discover some instances of special protection from your guardian angel.

Have you always honored him, taken him into your confidence, and treated him as a friend? If thus far you have neglected to pay attention to his presence and have been unmindful of his services, ask his pardon on the spot for your ungrateful and unkind behavior. Beseech him to forgive you and to continue his protection over you. Now you see, with the eyes of faith, his bright and beautiful form, and you will never more forget his loving company nor the merciful Father who sent him to you.

LXII.

Who Loves Me Most?

THIS question affects our whole moral being. Love is the life of the soul. He who has no love in his bosom is morally dead. The beloved disciple of Christ sets forth this solemn truth: "He that loveth not, abideth in death" (I. St. John iii. 14). Without love, human character warps and shrivels into barrenness and insensibility. Love gives life and strength, color and fragrance, to the moral make-up of man. What the sun is to the

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